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THIS MONTH

SUMMER ISSUE 74



DO THIS...

With winter well and truly banished, it's tempting to embrace the great outdoors for as many hours as possible — but the white heat of summer can bring its own hazards...

Sun sense

When Team Sky's Chris Froome removed his mesh skinsuit to reveal a badly burned back in 2014, Twitter went crazy and many cyclists started thinking a bit more about sun protection.

At this time of year, long days in the saddle are much more tempting, but there are a few factors to consider before heading out of the front door. This may all sound obvious, but the risk of sun exhaustion and long-term skin damage is heightened when you're working up

a sweat on the bike. Even on cloudy days it's good to smother the sun cream on before you don your jersey and shorts so you don't end up missing patches. And with so many breathable features, including mesh panels in technical clothing, you could need to fill in the gaps.

Helpfully, many cycling garments now come labelled with a reassuring UV protection rating, so you know the likelihood of the sun's rays penetrating the fabric.

We all know how important hydration is, yet we often see riders out with just one 500ml bottle — when you're out in the heat all day, it's advisable to fit two bottle cages and up the fluid to at least 750ml.

You may find you have less of an appetite in the warmer weather but you'll still be depleting your carbohydrate stores. Whether you choose to top up by way of a cake stop or a carb drink, aim to replenish every hour. The rule of thumb is roughly 60g of carbohydrate per hour for rides over 1.5 hours.

Useful links

www.nhs.uk — for advice on heat exhaustion, heat stroke and sun burn.

For UV protective clothing options, try:

www.yellow-limited.com

www.saddleback.co.uk

www.decathlon.co.uk





- 1) Aubergine
- 2) Broad beans
- 3) Courgettes

IN



New season of the Revolution Series

World-class track cycling comes to the brand new Derby Velodrome for the opening round of the 2015/16 Revolution Series.

Challenge events for women

The ever-popular Breeze rides are offering 'Challenge Events' this year, with a choice of 50km or 100km routes. The aim is to provide a friendly introduction to longer distance riding.

Pedal-powered washing

By replacing the front wheel with a washing machine drum and fitting a generator to the bike, designers have developed a machine that combines turbo-training with doing the laundry.

Reheated pasta

Recent findings suggest that reheating cooked pasta lowers its ability to raise glucose levels compared to eating it freshly cooked.



Sunburn

Over the past five years the number of hospital admissions for skin cancer has increased by 14 per cent.

Sitting down

Prolonged periods of sitting could be linked to a range of health problems, so introduce some movement every 30 minutes, even if you've cycled to work.

Sugar

Several of the big supermarkets have started reducing the sugar content of their own-label soft drinks.



Fabric softeners

Adding fabric softeners to your sports wash interferes with the wicking properties of technical kit, so is best avoided.

OUT

Go 80/20 to get fitter

Cut out mid-intensity rides to boost cycling performance

Simon Schofield

Longer, warmer (we hope) days are the time of the year to get fitter on the bike. But deciding how to get stronger can lead into the potentially confusing world of sports science with its forest of acronyms and rival theories.

The Pareto Principle, sometimes known as the 80/20 rule, cuts through the confusion. The rule applies to many aspects of life — one of its best-known examples is that you wear 20 per cent of your clothes 80 per cent of the time.

Now a study from training expert, Norwegian researcher Stephen Sailer, shows that the 80/20 rule can work in cycling. In short, 80 per cent of the time on the bike should be easy pedalling, way below the level where you can no longer speak

comfortably. The other 20 per cent should be moderately hard, or hard — the sort of effort that leaves you breathless on a hill.

This avoids riding the mid-range of intensity where Sailer claims you "get stuck in the middle gears" and don't really get much benefit in training terms.

How does this translate to everyday cyclists? Work out how many hours you cycle a week — let's say five hours. Four hours of this should be spent at a really easy pace and one hour at a pace to make you breathless.

It's best to break up the one hour at higher intensities. So, on a one-hour ride, ride slower than usual for 48-50 minutes (80 per cent) and push hard for 10-12 minutes (20 per cent). You can apply this breakdown to any ride.



Ride hard, ride slow but cut out the middle ground

In the loop with disc brakes

With more and more road bikes coming equipped with disc brakes, there's a range of standards emerging. Using a quick-release at the front has disadvantages, as the braking forces on the forks are greater than with rim brakes and it's also harder to realign the disc to the caliper if a wheel is removed.

Many of the next generation of disc road bikes are equipped with front thru-axles, where the wheel is screwed into the forks to increase rigidity, although there's no real consensus on 12mm or 15mm versions

yet and there are also proprietary systems like Focus's RAT.

Even when a front thru-axle is used, many bikes come with a standard quick-release at the rear, where the triangle helps even out braking stresses.

Add in centerlock versus six-bolt discs, three caliper-mounting systems and hydraulic or mechanical braking systems, and things get complicated. Many disc brake wheels have optional adapters between standards — useful for future-proofing.

1888 The year cyclists were officially given the right to ride on the road. The Local Government Act stated, "bicycles, tricycles, velocipedes and other similar machines are hereby declared to be carriages".

100 trillion The number of bacteria found in the average gut. Professor Tim Spector of The British Gut Project, a study aiming to record our intestinal bacteria, recommends eating a diverse range of natural foods to support a healthy 'microbiome'.

RIDE TO LIVE

I've been riding a bike since I was four years old. My mum just put me on one, she never thought I might not be able to ride it. That helped my spatial awareness. I'm fortunate that my eye condition means I haven't got any blotches or tunnelling.

I've competed in five sports at world level: cross-country skiing, track, triathlon, swimming and cycling. I think I've got 14 medals for world, international and European events. I want to be the best I can be but I do it for the joy of it.

I did National Star's Star Cycling Challenge because the place is close to my heart. It was a great opportunity to get out and train on the tandem with my co-pilot Neil Rutter. He's a brilliant cyclist. Usually we can average 25mph for that kind of distance on the tandem but we averaged just over 17mph, which shows how tough the course was. My average heart rate for the ride was 158 with a max of 180; I really worked hard. Some parts of the course were really tricky on the tandem but Neil handled the bike well and we got around safely in three hours, 34 minutes.

My relationships with my co-pilots are all about trust. When they throw us in to a corner at 50mph they've got to know I'm going to follow the bike and I've got to know they're going to miss the potholes. When we're training and we're screeching downhill I'm screaming for the co-pilot to hit the brakes. I get really scared. When it's a race I'm different. All I care about is catching the bike in front.

I'm about to ask the International Cycling Federation to let me compete solo at the World Masters Track Cycling Championships at Manchester Velodrome. I want to be in the top five in my age group. You get pigeonholed as a disabled person who is a tandem rider and told, yeah, you sit on the back of the bike. I will see trying to persuade the organisers as the real challenge.

I get bored really easily but I've learned to know what motivates me, it's the excitement, the challenge; you have to feed those things.

Next year's Star Cycling Challenge will be on Sunday April 24, 2016. To find out more email Matthew Nolan on mnolan@natstar.ac.uk or go to www.nationalstar.org



Paralympian cyclist James Brown (left) and his sighted tandem co-pilot Neil Rutter at National Star's charity Star Cycling Challenge in Cheltenham

James Brown

Age: 50 **Occupation:** Paralympic cyclist **Vision:** Five per cent in right eye, three per cent in left eye. **Medals:** 14 including two Paralympic golds, and one bronze. **Loves:** Riding on Salisbury Plain without a sighted co-pilot

46% Increase in hospital admissions in England for strokes among men aged 40-54. Among other risk factors, this rise in the last 15 years is thought to reflect increasingly sedentary lifestyles

20 mosques were visited during a charity ride for Marie Curie Cancer Care. A wide range of cyclists took part in this event to show unity between communities in Bradford



SiS Overnight Protein £39.99

Specifically designed to work while you sleep, this powdered bedtime drink mixes easily with water. Each serving contains around 27g of protein per serving, depending on the flavour. This formulation has low levels of carbohydrate and fat, so you can rest assured that your body is getting exactly what it needs for recovery.

www.scienceinsport.com



Anita Extreme Control sports bra £48

Anita's best-selling sports bra is available in a range of colours and is designed to offer control and support during exercise. It's important to have a correctly fitted sports bra during cycling and this cut from Anita Rosa Faia offers wide, padded straps that adjust in length for the perfect fit. The firm stretch-fabric and seamed cups provide the bust with strong support and the back panels wick moisture.

www.figleaves.com



Ohso £3.99

Promising your daily boost of friendly bacteria, Ohso's Good Chocolate tastes great and offers some goodness in each bar. Double Olympic gold medalist Laura Trott is a fan and so are we. With a range of yummy flavours in small, gluten-free portions, you're less likely to overindulge too!

www.ohsolovesyourtummy.com



Melon Urban Active helmet £39.99

Constructed using the well-proven 'ESP' head protection system, the quirky Melon uses Coolmax padding and its own airflow channel system to prevent overheating. Paired with the easy-to-use magnetic buckle it's an excellent commuter alternative helmet — especially now that it's a tenner cheaper than last year!

www.fisheroutdoor.co.uk



Endura FS260 Pro women's jersey £64.99

Endura's close-fitting jersey is constructed using mesh panels and a fast-wicking fabric that helps to reduce heat build-up and keep you cool on those hot summer rides. Combined with three decent-sized rear pockets, including a zipped one for valuables, it's as practical as it is sporty.

www.endurasport.com



Hoy Vulpine Women's El Toro bibshorts £79.99

Designed in collaboration with a range of top female riders, including the Matrix Fitness Pro Cycling team, these bibshorts manage to be both flattering and comfortable, while still delivering on performance and value. Recommended.

www.evanscycles.com



Bobike ONE maxi £99.99

With summer bike rides firmly on the menu, the Bobike ONE maxi allows even the smallest family members to join in. Bobike says its simple click-and-go mount and no tools adjustment means minimum faff and maximum riding time. Suitable from nine months until six years (22kg).

www.madison.co.uk



Rude Health Drinking Oats £2.49 250g

Rude Health are now making it even easier to get your daily dose of oaty goodness with its Drinking Oats. Rude Health says the finely-milled oats are designed to be added to any drink, making them ideal for a breakfast smoothie, a nutritious recovery drink or one of the many ideas and recipes on Rude Health's excellent website.

www.rudehealth.com



Howies Broad Haven Rucksack £49.00

This 18-litre backpack from quirky outdoor brand Howies features a number of handy compartments that include a lined padded laptop pocket for 15in laptops, making it perfect for commuting. What's more, it comprises a rainproof cover with a reflective arrow that urges motorists to give you enough space — just make sure you're buying the UK version that points the right way!

www.howies.co.uk



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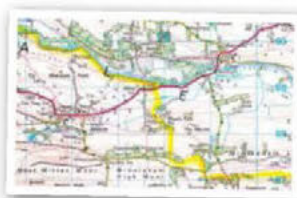
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CK3 GIRO – CLARIS 10x – £654.99

CK3 GIRO – SORA 10x – £734.99

CK3 GIRO – 105 11x – £899.99



Strava Local

New feature uses rider data to help visitors find the best routes

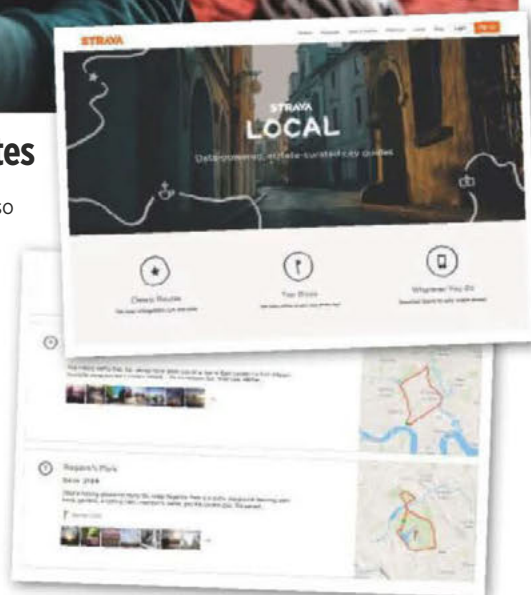
Hannah Bussey

Social fitness app Strava has launched Strava Local, a collection of cycling (and running) city guides for 12 cities including London, Paris, Milan and Berlin. Using data collected from uploaded activities, Strava Local has pulled together the most popular rides, and all-important cafe stops, from millions of uploaded activities, allowing visitors to explore tried-and-tested routes by simply uploading them to their own GPS device.

Strava claims it has collated athlete data and spoken to local influencers to make sure that the guides offer a great riding (and running) experience, not just someone's daily commute.

Using this data and local knowledge has also allowed Strava to include Top Stops for coffee, bike shops or even just a great photo opportunity, along with a ride summary of what to expect and the usual distance and elevation.

Based on analysis of over 10 million Strava activities, London's City Guide maps take riders on loops of up to 100 miles out of the city. This new addition to the already excellent app is ideal for business trips and weekend city breaks when the hassle of finding where to ride safely would often mean the bike stays at home. All City Guides can be found at: www.strava.com/local



Are you getting enough exercise?

Photos: Daniel Gould

The lazy league

We British are slightly lazier than the French, but we're more energetic than the Poles and the Portuguese. However, the Germans and the Dutch beat us hands-down.

The news comes in a new league table published by the British Heart Foundation showing the percentages of people in each country getting too little exercise. Only 14 per cent of the Netherlands' population takes too little exercise. Could it be that the Netherlands' cycling-friendly infrastructure plays a part in this?

In the UK, 44 per cent of us take too little exercise (it's 46 per cent of the French) but even the indolent Gauls are not as slothful as the Portuguese, 69 per cent of whom fail to hit the healthy activity target, according to the BHF. Fifty-five per cent of Poles don't exercise enough, and ditto for 26 per cent of Germans.

What counts as 'not enough' exercise? Current advice recommends at least 150 minutes of exercise per week.



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The beacons of hope

MS sufferer to visit every lighthouse in England and Wales to support charity who helped him

Simon Schofield

Setting a landmark as a destination — whether it be a cafe that serves delicious cake or the top of a hill — is a great motivator for getting on the bike.

So hats off to Edward Peppitt, 46, for devising a fund-raising tour packed with a really challenging set of landmarks. Peppitt is going to cycle to every one of the 200 lighthouses on the coast of England and Wales to raise money for a multiple sclerosis charity.

The enterprise is all the more impressive as Peppitt admits to being “woefully unprepared”. But at least he’s getting a taste of the very windy conditions he’s likely to face on the coastal trip. “I train three times a week, pedalling about 15-20 miles against the wind towards Dungeness lighthouse,” he says.

Peppitt is starting in Kent and heading

clockwise around the coast on his hand-built British Thorn Nomad touring bike. He estimates the trip will take between 100 and 120 days. And he won’t be missing out any of the more difficult destinations. Peppitt plans to beg ferry crossings and even jump on fishing boats to get to the lighthouses perched on islands or rocky outcrops.

Rock bottom

It’s only three years since Peppitt was diagnosed with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis (RRMS). The neurological condition cost him his sight for a period and his job.

But support from a community called Shift MS, and medication helped Peppitt turn his life around sufficiently to embark on his ride. Now he’s raising money as a thank-you and to give something back.

‘The Lighthouse Tour’ was born of his lifelong obsession with the remote, towering structures. He often dragged his wife and three children reluctantly around various lighthouses on family trips. He has clocked up visits to 70 so far.

Two of the most remote will most likely provide the biggest challenges of Peppitt’s bike quest. “The Eddystone lighthouse, off the coast of Plymouth, and the Bishop Rock lighthouse, near the Isles of Scilly, are the harshest and most inaccessible,” he says.

Peppitt’s adventure, officially called the Beacon Bike, can be followed live on the web as he’s providing updates every 15 minutes. thebeaconbike.co.uk



Boom findings

A study by researchers from the Centre for Transport and Society at UWE Bristol found that people over 65 make up only one per cent of all bike journeys in the UK.

Project Cycle Boom aims to uncover the factors that

discourage and encourage cycling in later life and identify how the physical environment and equipment can be better designed to help people continue or reconnect with cycling.

Dr Kiron Chatterjee of UWE said that cyclists were currently “disproportionately young or middle-aged, white males”.

“It tends to be assumed that the capacity and inclination to cycle declines as people grow older and this has led us to design and build physical environments that are unsympathetic to the experience of cycling when you are older,” he explained.

Chatterjee added that Bristol registered a 94 per cent increase

in the numbers of people cycling to work between 2001 and 2011, up from just over 8,000 to nearly 16,000. While cycling in Bristol may be rising, the proportion of all journeys at a national level was unchanged at two per cent.

You can register your interest to participate on the website www.cycleboom.org.

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Electronic bandages

University study suggests that road rash could be healed super-fast by using electronic stimulation therapy

Hannah Bussey

Great news for road rash sufferers: according to a study by the University of Manchester, electronic stimulation can reduce the volume, diameter and surface area of wounds, significantly accelerating healing.

Researchers at the university's Institute of Inflammation and Repair carried out the study on 40 volunteers by creating 0.5cm, apparently harmless wounds on each person's upper arm. One of the wounds was left to heal normally, whereas the other was treated with electrical pulses — over a period of two weeks.

These pulses stimulated the process through which new blood

vessels form — known as angiogenesis — increasing the blood flow to the damaged area and resulting in the wounds healing significantly faster.

This new data supports previous work by the university and sees it set to go into partnership with Oxford BioElectronics, a company specialising in linking technology and physiology, to develop devices and dressings that use the same techniques to speed up the healing of wounds.

Undoubtedly this new technology will have huge benefit throughout the medical world, and given its promise of getting us back on our bikes quicker, we'll be following this particular piece of research and development closely.

Can a taste of honey improve hay fever?

Simon Schofield

It's peak cycling season but it's also peak hay fever season — a tricky combination for serious sufferers. A cyclist on the move in the countryside can be a pollen-magnet.

Every year seems to bring a fresh 'miracle cure' for hay fever, and one of the most persistent has been the idea that a spoonful of locally-produced honey reduces the irritating symptoms of seasonal allergic rhinitis (to give hay fever its proper name).

Honey has its uses on the bike — diluted in

your water bottle, it's a great natural alternative to energy gels. But as a cure for hay fever, it's not the answer, suggests the evidence.

A study for the *Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology* gave dozens of sufferers either locally-produced, unpasteurised honey, commercial honey or a placebo.

They tracked their symptoms over several months, and neither of the groups taking honey suffered less than the placebo group, suggesting that honey does nothing for runny noses and itchy eyes.

People seeking a natural alternative to anti-histamines — the standard treatment for hay fever — may have come across a plant extract called butterbur. Clinical trials have found that butterbur could be as effective as anti-histamines.

But several European countries have banned its sale, and the relevant UK authority, the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency, advises against its use and has not issued a licence for it. There are concerns it could damage the liver. Best avoided.



Hay fever? Honey
isn't the answer

DIRECT ADVANTAGE



VITUS
WWW.VITUSBIKES.COM



Direct Sales = Value for You. Vitus offers direct sales through Chain Reaction Cycles. There is no middleman which means you deal direct with us and we can keep our prices low. Vitus develop and deliver your bike without any wholesalers or retail outlets. This allows us to offer you the best bike at the best possible price.

KAYE'S TOOLBOX TIPS



CA's resident mechanic, Kaye Patton is able to fix pretty much anything

I've been working at some sportives recently, helping out riders who ask us to look at their bikes.

A good sportive will have at least one fixed aid-station with a mechanic or two on hand to lend out tools, pumps and make basic repairs.

In a big sportive with 1,000 or more entrants it's a given that some riders will puncture, break or bend something during the ride, while others simply neglect to maintain their bikes and just hope that it will keep going.

Setting off on a long ride on a bike that's not in good working order is plain daft. Look after your bike, keep it serviced and if you do have a problem on a sportive the chances are it will be a minor one.

Be sportive-ready with these six tips



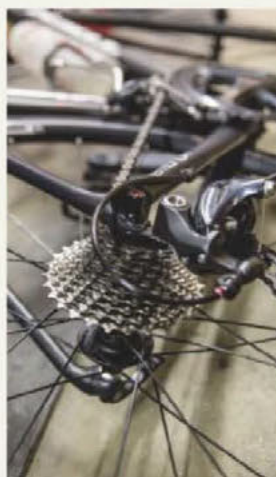
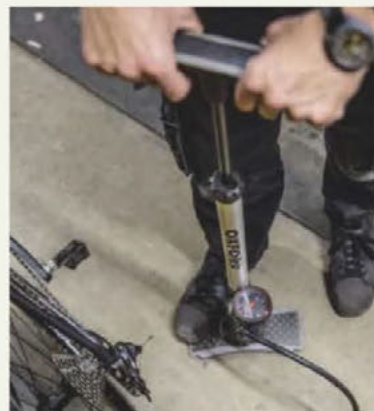
1 Always carry a spare inner tube with two or three tyre levers and a pump. Use a rubber band to lash the levers to the tube. Make sure you buy a tube with the correct length valve to suit the depth of your rims.

3 We see quite a few cyclists who have had a puncture but when they get to us the spare tube is going down again. Quite often this is because they forgot to remove the cause of the first puncture, usually a tiny piece of flint or a thorn. Always check the inside of the tyre for foreign objects before you replace the tube. Be careful not to cut your fingers though!



4 Oil your chain before the event and if it's longer than a few hours consider using wet lube in a bottle. I find that many chains are looking quite dry halfway through a sportive. Some dry lubes and aerosol sprays are not up to the job of lubricating the chain for an all-day ride. Don't smother the chain in oil — it doesn't need to show on the outside plates — it's on the rollers where it needs it.

2 If you do puncture on a sportive you can use your spare inner tube to get going again and only lose a few minutes or so. Be aware that it takes a lot of effort to get 100psi into the tyre with a mini-pump. Chances are you'll get to 60psi and although that might feel OK it's wise to borrow a track pump at the aid-station to get the tyre back up to 80-100psi.



5 Always lay your bike down on the non-drive side so that the chainset faces upwards. If you lie the bike down on the gear side it can scratch the rear derailleur and even bend the hanger that it bolts to. Several bikes needed their gear hangers bending back into line the last time I worked on a sportive.



6 On a quality sportive you should not have to pay for any help from the mechanics at the aid-stations. The only things you will be asked to pay for are inner tubes and spares. I've heard of one or two cowboy mechanics turning up uninvited at sportives and charging for their services. Make a note of where the official aid-stations are.



Very smart glasses

It might seem a bit steep to pay £579.99 for a pair of sunglasses, but these are no ordinary sunglasses. Similar to Google Glass, the Recon Jet uses a head-up display to project details, such as power output, speed, text message notifications and navigation, onto the lenses so you can see your data without taking your eyes off the road.

They also include an HD camera for taking pictures and video on the move with smartphone connectivity to Apple and Android devices, and speed and cadence connectivity via both Bluetooth and ANT+.

Clearly all this technology has to go somewhere, which explains the plastic casings on either side of the lenses, although Recon tells us that it is working on slimming these down (and improving the four to six-hour battery life) in future updates.



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“Skills specific training”

This September I've been lucky enough to get a place on the London to Paris ride with Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research. In recent months we have been sharing stories of our preparations, or lack of.

Finding the time to prepare for an event can be a big challenge and this is where turbo-trainers, Wattbikes and spin classes can become a trusted friend. This is a brilliant way to put in time-efficient, focused sessions but while sitting on a static bike for short, intense periods may make you fitter it won't necessarily help you with all the other elements of a multi-day event.

Time in the saddle day-after-day can take its toll on your body and sitting in a group and tuning your cornering, climbing and descending technique won't come easily if you've never done it before.

If, like us, you're off on a ride that will see you cover long distances over several days, start focusing on skills sessions, as well as your fitness. Throw in some longer days on the road whenever you can and you'll find things much more comfortable when the big day arrives.

Head to page 74 for this month's fitness tips from our resident experts.



Rebecca

Rebecca Charlton, deputy editor

Inbox

Write to us at

cyclingactive@timeinc.com

Flipping brilliant!

I was happy to see the B'Twin Mach 720 review in (CA June) as I have been riding one since November. Overall, I have been delighted with the bike and agree with pretty much everything in the review and was able to relate it to my own experience. Now that winter is over I have been doing longer rides. I soon found that any ride over 60 miles really took its toll on my back and fatigue would kick in. It was very frustrating as it became obvious that I was holding my weekend cycling companion back.

A couple of weeks ago, after reading the review, I decided to take on board the advice regarding flipping the stem due to the racy geometry of the frame and the bike now feels so much more comfortable. Confidence is high, my back is now in check and I am no longer dreading an upcoming 105-mile sportive. I may not look as cool to the race snobs (such as my weekend cycle companion) with a flipped stem but hopefully I can drop him on the first climb... but then wait for him as he has been good enough to wait for me the last two months.

Greg Brown, email



Help the newbies

Recently I have seen an increase in people getting into cycling and many new members joining our road club. We all try to advise new riders and help them with their kit and maintenance. I'd like to make a point that maybe bike shops are not taking the time to show new riders how to operate their new machines.

Some riders out for the first time end up riding everywhere in the small chainring, small sprocket with the chain grinding along the front derailleur simply because they don't know how to use the shifters correctly. Some have very little air in their tyres and, one major issue, which

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is a serious risk, is not having the quick-release done up properly, or indeed so tight it takes something wrapped around the lever to yank it open.

I asked one rider to show me how he fits his wheels. He popped the hub into the dropout, closed the lever then proceeded to wind it round until it was so tight it wouldn't move any more — apparently he'd been riding his bike like this since he had to take the front wheel off to get it in his car to fetch it home from the store!

Quite often new riders are nervous about making adjustments to their bike for fear of breaking something expensive. It's down to shops and more experienced riders to show new riders that it's not very complicated, and teach them the technique. After all, if you have someone to show you how it's done, it's much easier to do it yourself.

Ian Moss, email

Those who play together...

Most of my mileage is commuting — around 15 miles daily. Not a massive distance but one that is achievable most days, and I only resort to the car if it's absolutely tipping it down.

I add some mileage on days off when my wife's at work and the little one is at school. These are the days when I chase the Strava KOMs (generally with little success, but that's another story) as I haven't got a rucksack weighing me down.



Cycling brings people closer



Bruised but unabashed

I entered the ballot for this year's Prudential RideLondon-Surrey 100 in August but unfortunately didn't make the cut. But that disappointment was soon replaced with joy as I managed to secure a place riding for Asthma UK, which is great because being an asthma sufferer myself, I know how difficult it can be.

So with a place secured it was time to train. Now comes the bad news: a chest infection laid me low for about two months. Fully recovered it was time to hit the road. But on the second ride out, I hit the road a little too literally. I took a corner too fast, lost control and ended up in the back of an ambulance for a trip to A&E. So, another month off the bike but thankfully no serious damage done, just shoulder and hip injuries — and of course, a big dent in my pride.

Now, with just a couple of months to the big day, I have been back on the road for a couple of weeks and am already building up the miles and feeling good. A lot more hard work and I'll be ready to tackle the roads of London and Surrey. See you all on the start line.

Steve Mutch, Southend



Letter of the month wins a pair of Shimano R107 cycling shoes worth £99.99!

A couple of years ago my wife sold her heavy Dutch town bike and bought a retro 1980s dropped-bar 'racer' and we started going on rides together. I would forget about speed and we would bumble along together, choosing our route at each junction and dropping in at cafes and interesting places we'd seen when out in the car. My wife has now decided to ditch the retro look and has gone for an all-out road bike with an alloy frame and a carbon fork. We are heading out for our first ride together since the purchase soon. This cycling time seems to bring us closer together than any journey in the car ever does.

Sometimes you just have to forget the 'Wiggo' style time trials against cyberspace strangers and simply enjoy bimbaling along with your significant other...

Simon Elson, email



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NEW BIKE TESTED

WHY THIS BIKE?

Top-spec adventure road bike

BEST FOR

Exploring bridlepaths, towpaths and back roads

TESTED THIS MONTH

Dry-ish woods, fields, rocky paths and shady lanes



GT Grade Carbon Ultegra £2,599.99

Super-competent on/off-roader

Paul Norman

Adventure road is a burgeoning riding discipline in which roads are mixed with off-road sections through fields, along bridleways and canal towpaths. GT, a brand with a strong presence in mountain biking, has launched into adventure road with the Grade. This bike takes design elements from GT's mountain bikes and melds them into a road bike with many on-trend features: high compliance for

comfort, wide tyres, tubeless-ready wheels, hydraulic disc brakes. The range includes an aluminium frame offered at different spec levels and two carbon framed bikes. We have the top-spec Ultegra version of the latter.

Frameset

The Grade's mountain bike DNA is evident in its long wheelbase and a relaxed head tube angle to add stability off road. The standout feature is the ultra-thin bridgeless seatstays, which pass either side of the seat tube to meet at the top tube. These have a solid fibreglass core for rigidity, but are wrapped in carbon-fibre to aid vibration damping. There's lots of clearance for tyres up to 40mm wide, so that a mountain bike tyre could be fitted and there's plenty of room to collect mud without the wheel clogging up.

Components

The Grade comes with a complete Ultegra groupset including a long-cage rear derailleur to accommodate the 11-30 cassette. The 52/36 chainset runs

Specification

Frameset: GT EnduRoad carbon, tapered carbon fork
Gears: Shimano Ultegra 11-30 22-speed
Brakes: Shimano R685 hydraulic, 160mm rotors
Chainset: Shimano Ultegra 52/36t
Wheels: Stans No Tubes Grail rims, DT Swiss 240 hubs, 15mm thru axle front, quick-release rear
Tyres: Continental Grand Sport Race 700x28c
Bar: GT DropTune Ultra Light with 14° flair, alloy
Stem: GT SL alloy
Saddle: Fizik Aliante Delta
Seatpost: FSA K-Force Light, 27.2mm
Size range: 51, 53, 55, 56, 58, 60cm
Weight: 8.88kg/19.6lb
Size tested: 55cm (M)
Contact: www.gt bicycles.com

on a Praxis Works bottom bracket — a quality solution to allow a Shimano unit to be fitted into the BB30 bottom bracket shell. The Grade has Shimano's Ictech hydraulic disc brakes, which have built-in cooling fins designed to dissipate heat and avoid brake fade on longer descents.

GT's branded bars are 42mm wide but flare out to 50cm wide at the drops, to provide more precise handling, while the Fizik Aliante saddle sits on an FSA carbon seatpost, which should help with shock absorption.

Wheels

The wheels are built up with DT Swiss 240 centrelock disc brake hubs with 160mm Shimano Ictech rotors and laced to Stan's No Tubes Grail 28 hole rims. These are first-rate components that provide a quality ride and should be durable. The front wheel sits on a 15mm thru axle to aid front-end rigidity — still a rarity on road bikes, but common on mountain bikes.

Although the Continental Grand Sport Race 28mm tyres are set up with tubes, the rims are designed to be easily converted to tubeless. Stan's has pioneered the trend to wider rims and at 20mm wide; the Grail allows a tyre diameter of 31mm. The extra air volume in the tyres allows them to be run at lower pressures and helps cushion the ride over bumpy surfaces.



The right angle: the head tube is 'relaxed'

"I assumed the Grade was a soft roader with looks but it soon showed its capability"

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The 1.5 front end and oversize BB-area create a very balanced and stiff frame

BUILD SPECIFICATION:

Groupset: Shimano 105 5800 11 speed with the exception of a Shimano RS500 Chainset and Shimano BR561 brakes

Wheels: Supra RA Comp

Tyres: Schwalbe RA Comp

Saddle: Supra Comp Line

Seatpost: Supra Comp Line

Bars & Stem: Supra Comp Line

Weight: From 7.8kg



Under-BB cable run protected from mud



Hydraulic disc brakes with cooling fins



Carbon-fibre seatstays help reduce vibration

Riding

Given the slick tyres and rather posh spec, I'd originally assumed the Grade was a soft roader with the looks but perhaps not the capability to take on serious off-road conditions. A few hours of riding, though, showed just how capable the bike is.

I was soon cycling through woods, across fields, along rocky tracks and down muddy descents. There was some wheel slip from the slick tyres on loose surfaces, but nothing uncontrollable. The Ictech brakes have the stopping power to give confidence on descents, and once paths get too broken and narrow to ride, the bike is comfortable to shoulder and carry to flatter ground.

On-road handling is good too, with a stable ride and the range of gears to press on over undulating roads, while the wide tyres give a comfortable ride over more broken road surfaces without adding noticeable rolling resistance.

Conclusion

If you're looking to extend your riding off-road but still want a bike that is fast on road and with the capability to take on pretty much anything, the Grade is an excellent choice. As delivered, this bike will provide a quality ride in drier British conditions, while if you want to ride it in the winter, there's the capacity and clearance to fit wider knobbly tyres. This really is a do-it-all bike.

End

VERDICT

Terrific bike for mixed terrain riding with a great spec and clever design, which will handle more or less anything on or off-road.

Spot on...

- Great frame
- Top-spec components
- Quality wheels and brakes

Could do better

- It's tubeless ready, so a pity it's not delivered tubeless

SPECIFICATION LEVEL	19/20
BUILD QUALITY	19/20
ROAD HANDLING	19/20
RIDE COMFORT	19/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	18/20
OVERALL RATING	94 /100

ALTERNATIVES

BMC Granfondo GF02 Ultegra Disc £2,300.00

A bike with a similar spec and intent but with an aluminium frame rather than carbon, the BMC also boasts off-road compliance and lots of space for 35mm tyres. It's a similar weight too and comes with tubeless-ready wheels with disc brakes — although these are mechanical rather than hydraulic.



Cannondale Super X Hi-Mod Disc CX1 £2,499.99

An all-carbon cyclo-cross bike with SRAM's latest 1x shifting, which dispenses with the front double chainring by providing a wider spread of ratios at the rear. This makes things simpler and saves weight, although top-end speed and low gear range suffer. It has SRAM's hydraulic disc brakes and 35mm knobbly cyclo-cross tyres too.



CA EXPLAINER

Cyclo-cross bikes

Cyclo-cross (CX) bikes have distinctive features: lots of mud clearance, narrow gear ratios (no need for anything above a 46t chainset), cantilever or disc brakes to avoid clogging with mud. Tyres are knobbly and may be run as low as 20psi to ensure grip in muddy conditions. SPD pedals enable riders to dismount and run with the bike.



Cyclo-cross bikes can take on most terrain

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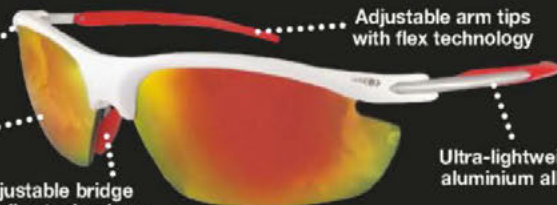
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Great value road bike

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Summer riding of all distances

TESTED THIS MONTH

220 miles over a dry bank holiday with clubmates



Ribble Evo-Pro Carbon £999

Good looks and great value

Kaye Patton

Ribble is an internet bike store with its own brand of bicycles. I find it reliable and good value. I shop frequently with Ribble and as a result was sent an email about its special offer Evo-Pro Carbon at an amazing price of £999. Coupled with interest-free finance, it seemed like too good an offer to pass up.

Frameset

The frame has quite racy geometry with a slightly sloping top tube. While clicking on the various options on the website, I chose the maximum headset spacers possible as the steerer can always be cut to attain the desired handlebar height.

The frame and fork are full 3K carbon with the latter having a slight forward rake to give more comfort on uneven surfaces through the hands and

shoulders. Being carbon it also soaks up a lot of the bumps and has little flex.

Initially I found that when I got out of the saddle the fork rake made the bike feel a little less responsive than a fork with straight blades, but the added comfort was well worth it and it's something you quickly get used to. The carbon forks are attached to a steel steerer, which means there is a nice secure star nut used to tighten the stem rather than a carbon bung.

There are threaded eyes for a rear mudguard or rack but the fork does not have them. Twin bottle cage mounts are handy if you want two bottles or one bottle and a container for spare inner tubes/tools or even a light raincoat.

The frame is finished off in a lovely bright red with silver graphics. The inward curve of the seat and chainstays make the bike very attractive looking. The curve of the chainstay is advantageous to anyone who rides with their heels inwards or has particularly wide feet as it gives extra clearance on the frame.

"Comfort and performance are amazing — every bit as good as many of the big brands"

Specification

Frameset: 3K carbon-fibre, carbon fork with steel steerer
Gears/brakes/chainset: Shimano Ultegra 6800 11-speed
Wheels: Fulcrum Racing Quattro
Tyres: Vittoria Rubino 3 700x23c Rigid
Bars/stem: Deda RHM 016061 alloy
Saddle: Selle Italia SL
Seatpost: CSN carbon S.E.
Size Range: 48, 52cm
Size Tested: 48cm
Weight: 8.5kg (18.7lb)
Contact: www.ribblecycles.co.uk


Components

Astonishingly for the price of £999 the bike is specced with the full Shimano Ultegra 6800 special edition double groupset. This is the latest 11-speed version of Shimano's second-tier groupset and although the chain is thinner and has to be replaced more often than a 10-speed, it is every bit as smooth and precise.

The left-hand lever for the front mech also has two trims so that chain rub is kept to an absolute minimum. The bike build gives you a choice of three cassette sizings, as well as three choices of chainset.

The handlebars, stem and bar tape are Deda, which feel and look really good but these are items you can spec individually when you do your build with Ribble. The bars are not too deep to make resting your hands on the hoods not feel like a stretch forward compared with holding the tops of the bars. The Selle Italia saddle is available in three colours as well as men's or ladies'. The seat pillar can be upgraded to carbon for an extra £19.

Wheels

The wheels are standard Rodi Airline 5 clinchers. For an extra £170 these can be upgraded to Fulcrum Racing Quattro wheels. That's a very good upgrade. A nice touch on the Fulcrums is the spoke nipples are red to match the frame. 



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Raked-out fork gives neutral handling and great comfort

They give a nice stiff ride with no flex in the spokes when out of the saddle. The Vittoria Rubino 3 Rigid tyres give you a choice of eight colours in the build. I nearly opted for standard black but then went for red, which I am very pleased with as they make the bike stand out.

Riding

When I sat on the bike the saddle felt quite hard but its shape lends itself well to support the sit bones and it still felt comfortable on an 80-mile ride. Out of the saddle the bike felt very easy to steer and extra pressure on the pedals was instantly transformed into speed.

The cornering and descending felt very safe and the brakes were strong. I felt instantly confident to go fast and sit within a group of riders. Also I didn't get numbness in my hands, which I have experienced on other bikes.

Conclusion

I was amazed at how comfortable the Ribble was to ride. I did not expect it to be in the same league as other more expensive bikes, but it's top class.

The two trims on the front mech saw the chain run smoothly and quietly. Riding a compact chainset of 50/34 was a first for me, having only ridden 53/39 in the past. However, I did find that I had to be more aware of which chainring I was in when approaching hills; and the trim on the front mech has to be right or the chain rattles.

My main concern with an 11-speed chain is the narrowness of it and whether this will compromise its strength, though a number of my colleagues have reassured me that this won't be a problem, even after a tough winter of use.

As a result of riding with my club on this striking Ribble, three of my clubmates have placed an order. It is great value for money, extremely well-built, with attention to detail such as tyre and outer cable labels lined up to make it extra pleasing on the eye.

End



Ultegra brakes take quite some beating

VERDICT

Unbelievable, unbeatable value for money. A perfect first race bike or fast sportive machine

Spot on...

- Build quality
- 11-speed Ultegra gears
- Comfortable handlebars
- Very pleasing on the eye

Could do better

- No mudguard eyes on the fork
- Wheels could be lighter but would be more expensive

SPECIFICATION LEVEL	18/20
BUILD QUALITY	20/20
ROAD HANDLING	18/20
RIDE COMFORT	18/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	20/20
OVERALL RATING	94/100

ALTERNATIVES

Cannondale Synapse 105 £1,499.99

This is a full carbon frame but the groupset is a step down from the Ribble's Ultegra to Shimano 105 11-speed. The wheelset is Shimano RSO10 with Schwalbe Lugano tyres. This frame is Di2 ready, should you decide to upgrade the groupset to electronic gears.



Canyon Endurace CF 8.0 £1,299

A carbon-fibre frame and fork from Germany and, like the Ribble, bought online, so the cost is kept down. The groupset is Shimano 105 like the Cannondale. The wheelset is comparable to the Ribble's upgrade to Fulcrum Quattros, being DT Swiss with Continental Grand Prix 4000S II tyres. The lesser groupset, however, really does highlight the value of the Ribble EvoPro Carbon.



CA EXPLAINER

Made to please...

Ribble cycles is located in Preston but most people will use its bespoke online ordering and build programme. This gives plenty of options to customise your frame but beware — it is all too easy to get carried away and ramp up the price with upgrades.



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Isle of Wight and Richmond Park



KTM Revelator Prestige Di2 £5,499.99

Perfect for that first foray into racing

Jack Elton-Walters

This bike is the highest-level option offered by Austrian brand KTM. The quality that comes as a result of over 50 years' experience of making bicycles is easy to see. KTM may be better known in the UK for its motorcycles, but it's making an assured step into the crowded high-spec performance road bike market with the carbon-framed Revelator range.

Frameset

The carbon frame and fork are

attractive to look at and great to ride. The geometry is similar to that of a Trek Domane, a bike made for all-day comfort but which also carries race potential. This means that the KTM may, on paper, appear to be leaning towards comfort over speed, but in truth it is a very rapid machine.

During our test period, this bike was used for long rides on the Isle of Wight as well as speedy pre-work laps of Richmond Park. It delivered regardless of the parcours. The internal cable inlets are sleek and in-keeping with the

Specification

Frame Full carbon monocoque design with tapered head tube and full carbon fork

Gears Shimano Dura-Ace 9000 11-25t

Chainset Shimano Dura-Ace 9000 mid-compact 52-36t

Brakes Shimano Dura-Ace 9000

Wheels Mavic Cosmic Carbon SLE-C

Tyres Mavic Yksion Pro Griplink 23c, swapped out for Bontrager R3 Hard-Case Lite 25c

Handlebar Ritchey WCS Carbon Curve

Stem Ritchey WCS Carbon-Matrix

Saddle Selle Italia SLR Flow

Seatpost Ritchey WCS Link Flexlogic Carbon 27.2

Size range 52, 55, 57, 59cm

Weight 7.05kg (no pedals)

Size tested 55cm
www.fluidistribution.co.uk

“Simply put, this bike is fast, responsive and great fun to ride — it flies along with great efficiency”

aesthetics of the frameset. The width of the forks, girth of the bottom bracket and slightly oversized tubing on some stays eliminates flex to deliver a stiff ride with maximised power transfer.

Components

This bike comes with full a Shimano Dura-Ace groupset, including Di2 electronic shifting. At this price and with this quality of frameset, anything less than this pro-spec groupset would have been disappointing.

The test model came with a mid-compact 52-36t chainset and an 11-speed block with 11-25t sprockets. For me, this is slightly racier than I'd normally ride but is spot-on for the speedy vibes of the bike. Thanks to the low overall weight and efficient power transfer, such high gearing ended up not being a problem when riding the lumps and bumps of the Isle of Wight, including some 20 per cent ramps.

The high-end feel is continued with the Ritchey carbon finishing kit and Selle Italia saddle, showing that no corners have been cut in delivering a



Di2 shifting goes some way to justifying the price tag

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Evo frame and fork, 20 speed Shimano 105 gearing and Tiagra brakes, Shimano RS01 wheels. Rrp £1700 now £1049.99

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Beefy stays are conducive to maximum power transfer

top-quality package for the sizeable price tag.

Wheels

The Prestige comes with Mavic Cosmic Carbone SLE-C wheels that look and sound great. There's a definite satisfaction to the whoosh of an accelerating deep-section rim. The pair weighs in at 1,620g without tyres, meaning they aren't the lightest but are far from being too heavy for the rest of the bike. Irritatingly, they came with very short valves and awkward valve-extendors, which made for fiddly tyre changes. The supplied 23mm Mavic tyres were swapped out straight away for some 25mm Bontrager tyres, to reduce the likelihood of punctures.

Riding

Simply put, this bike is fast, responsive and great fun to ride. As mentioned, the frameset's geometry strikes a balance between speed and comfort — a combination that a lot of bikes these days seem to be favouring. The wheels and frame can feel a bit unforgiving on some under-maintained road surfaces, but put this bike on a smooth road and it flies along with great efficiency. The Dura-Ace brakes, which are set up Euro style — left lever for front brake — offer excellent stopping power, and the electronic shift gearing is clean, precise and would be spot-on in a race situation.

Conclusion

This is an eye-catching machine that offers a professional-spec ride. It comes with the best components and some great finishing kit, but the price tag casts it into a busy arena of well-known brands. As such, there is little to set it apart and it may pale into the background of the big names on the market. At a lower price, this bike would be a solid choice for any aspiring racer looking to make a big investment.

End



Mavic deep section hoops purr at pace

VERDICT

Great-looking bike with top-end spec and excellent performance

Spot on...

- Dura-Ace Di2
- Very low weight
- Good wheels

Could do better

- Might not be uniquely good enough to stand out in a saturated market

SPECIFICATION LEVEL	20/20
BUILD QUALITY	20/20
ROAD HANDLING	19/20
RIDE COMFORT	18/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	15/20
OVERALL RATING	92 /100

ALTERNATIVES

Cannondale Super 6 Evo Hi-Mod Team 2015 Road Bike £5,499.99

This is billed as one of the lightest production frames and claims the best stiffness-to-weight ever recorded. No Shimano here: the groupset is SRAM Red and Cannondale's own SpideRing chainsets — coming with both a standard and a compact to be swapped as desired.

www.evanscycles.com



Trek Domane 6.9 2015 Road Bike £5,500

The Dura-Ace-equipped version of the Trek Domane comes with the signature IsoSpeed decoupler to provide both speed and all-day race comfort. This bike is a performance machine that can also survive a battering.

www.trek bikes.com/uk/en/



CA EXPLAINER

Electronic gearing

Electronic gearing is now *de rigueur* for all but a handful professional cyclists and its share of the amateur market is growing steadily. Instead of the usual cable-shift derailleurs, electronic gearing such as Shimano's Di2 and Campagnolo's EPS discards the need for wires with the use of small electrical cables to send a signal to the mechs to tell them to change.

Shifts are made by the push of a button, which means that the position of the shifters can be moved depending on the type of riding: under-bar shifters for climbing and cobbles, buttons on the drops for sprinters.



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7 OF THE BEST

Cycling sunglasses

With the height of summer just around the corner, *Henry Robertshaw* prays for blue skies as he puts seven pairs of sunnies to the test

Watch any professional bike race this summer and you'll see 99 per cent of the peloton wearing sunglasses come rain or shine. Of course this isn't great if you want to identify your favourite pro on TV, but for the riders they are a very important piece of kit.

Clearly the main point of any sunglasses, cycling or otherwise, is to shield your eyes from the sunlight. In Britain the sunlight might well be

reflecting off puddles in the road, but the concept is the same...

Talking of puddles, if you've ever been on a group ride on wet roads you'll be well aware of the second reason to invest in a pair of cycling glasses. When riding behind another rider, you'll find yourself constantly sprayed by water flicked up by your mate's rear wheel. Of course, one solution to this is to sit on the front of the group

all day, but if the legs aren't feeling up to this then a pair of sunglasses will help keep road mulch, or 'Belgian toothpaste', out of your eyes — particularly important if you use contact lenses.

Finally, a pair of sunglasses will prevent the tears from streaming down your face as you speed down descents, leaving your vision clear to concentrate on hitting the apex of that rapidly approaching corner.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Lenses

If you're spending more than £100 on a pair of sunglasses, you're going to want to wear them as often as possible. For this reason many glasses come supplied with multiple lenses to suit different conditions. Several manufacturers also produce photochromic lenses that respond to changes in brightness, although it's worth trying before you buy as some have the ability to change quicker than others. You should expect all smoked lenses to include UV protection.

Rubber grips

If you're using your sunglasses for time trialling, have a particularly exuberant climbing or sprinting style, or spend a lot of time looking down at your stem, it's important to pay attention to the rubber grips on the temples and nose bridge. These should prevent your glasses slipping down your face, even when you're hot and sweaty.

Frame

Of course, what you're really looking for is a pair of sunnies that will make you look great. Unfortunately, achieving pro looks is not simply a case of splashing out on the most expensive brand you can afford, but is instead a case of finding the right pair that fit the size and shape of your face. For example, if you've got a small face and nose it can be tricky to find a frame that won't end up looking like a pair of skiing goggles — our advice would be to try before you buy.

Lenses to suit different conditions



Wraparound designs offer great protection



They don't have to be subtle!



Oakley Polarised Radar EV Pitch £175

These brand new Radar EVs are slightly bulkier than previous incarnations of Oakley's half rim range, but I still think they're some of the best looking sunnies on the market. However, it's not all about good looks — this version features polarised lenses that do a great job of reducing glare. The fit is also excellent, and I never had a problem with these moving about

when sprinting. The only snags are I found the arms to be a little tight above my ear and they also come with a predictably premium price tag.

Great performing sunnies, but with the expected price penalty

9



www.oakley.com

Ekoi Mulistrata £113.38

The glasses of choice for many professional riders, the arms of the Ekoi Multistradas are sturdy and secure without digging into the temples — something that can be irritating on long rides. The iridium lenses are superb, the nosepiece is adjustable and at 25g a pair they are very light. For £113.38 Ekoi offers full customisation with regard to lens and frame colour,

which we think is great, allowing you to perfectly coordinate them with your bike and kit to really make you look the part on the club run.

Brilliant quality and price. If you like the looks, these are a winner

9



www.ekoi.fr

Adidas Evil Eye Half Rim Pro S £140

The sweat guard that runs along the top of the frame might be a little unnecessary (isn't that what eyebrows are for?), but as this is removable I can have few complaints about the scarily named Adidas Evil Eyes. Ventilation is excellent and I never had any problem with these steaming up when working hard, and the lightweight frame material keeps the glasses in place

while being so comfortable that I almost forgot I was wearing them. What's more, Adidas also throw in orange lenses for gloomier conditions.

A superb pair of sunnies with subtle looks and outstanding performance

10



www.adidascycling.com

Salice 012 CRX £84.95

The 012s come with photochromic lenses which, although not dark, are about right for UK riding conditions and adjust quickly to changing light levels. The lenses are quite large so peripheral protection is good. Misting is never an issue thanks to the built-in venting along the brows and they are also treated to repel water and dust. The wide nosepiece and rubberised temple grips keep the glasses in place

well and there are swappable clear lenses for low light conditions too. There's a huge selection of frame and lens colour options if black and orange don't float your boat.

Great lenses, frame, and colour options and an equally impressive price

9



www.manbi.com

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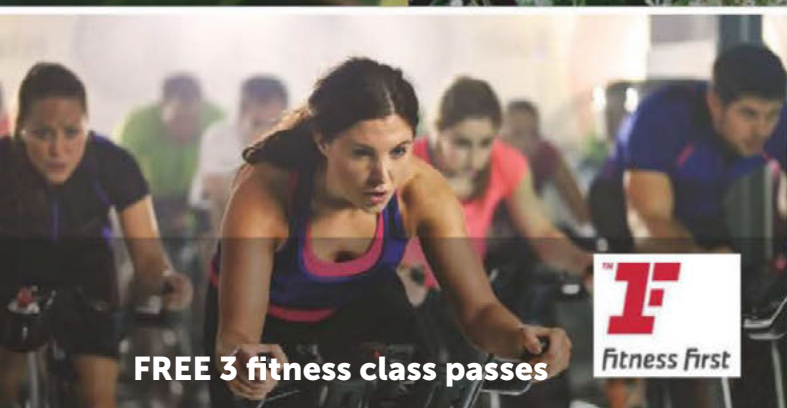
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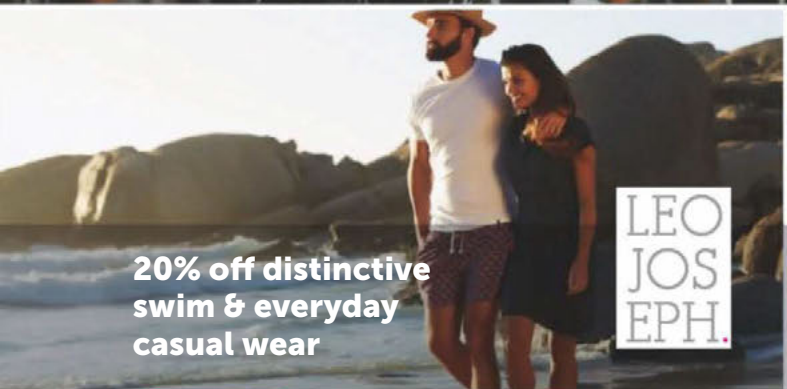
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POC DO Blade Race Day £195

With Marmite looks and a price tag that any sunglasses will struggle to justify, the POCs are not going to be for everyone. But the ventilation is among the best on test with absolutely zero misting — even when breathing hard on a steep climb. I was also impressed with the low weight considering the size. However, I found the large frame rubbed on

my cheekbones — so try before you buy to make sure they fit the shape of your face.

7

Excellent performance, but looks are not for everyone



www.2pure.co.uk

Tifosi Escalate HS £99.99

The Tifosi Escalate HS sunnies are like a Lego kit. They feature so many interchangeable components, I was kept amused for hours swapping things around. The arms can be clicked into frameless or half frame front sections and there are two different lens tints for each of these. Despite the additional joints required by their design, the glasses are sturdy enough and stay in place well. Peripheral coverage

is not quite as good as some of the other brands tested, although lens quality is good and all those options mean that you will never get bored with the same look.

7

Essentially four glasses in one, although coverage could have been better



www.zyro.co.uk

Bollé 6th Sense £154.99

Considering the high price I was disappointed with the quality of the frames. They creak and flex, giving a Fisher Price feel rather than that of high-end sports sunglasses. I found that the flexible arms allowed the shades to move, requiring me to manually put them back into place, which wasn't always ideal but the lenses are excellent and the looks have

grown on me. The side panels are removable, but when in place these glasses cannot be securely stowed in helmet vents.

7

They look cool and the lenses are superb, but are let down by flexy frames



www.bolle-europe.co.uk

VERDICT

While Oakley has been a regular test winner in the past, Adidas has really upped its game with the Evil Eye Half Rim Pros, which look great, have good lenses, and come with an excellent fit and low weight, which means that I barely noticed I was wearing them for most of the time.

The Oakleys are also worth consideration if you're prepared to splash out, with only minor flaws which could easily be overlooked. However, I really wasn't convinced that the POCs and Bolles did enough to justify their price tags.

If you haven't got close to £200 to spend then I was still very impressed by some of the less expensive options. The Salices in particular stood out, with their excellent photochromic lenses and securely fitting frame not putting them too far behind options costing nearly twice as much. The Ekois are also very good for the price.

Finally, if you're after four pairs of glasses for your money, the Tifosi Escalantes will certainly do the job, although I felt they were much more fun to put together than they were to wear.



Ultegra Di2 bikes: electronics on test

Is it time to make the switch?



Trek Domane 5.9 £3,300

Genesis Volare Stainless £3,399.99

Electronic shifters

Electronic shifting is usually likened to clicking a mouse to change gear. At a glance, the shift buttons resemble their mechanical counterparts and if you're used to mechanical Shimano, you'll instinctively go for the right buttons to up and downshift. The downshift button has a dimpled texture to help fingers locate it — obviously, this doesn't work with full-finger gloves on. It's possible to reconfigure the buttons by connecting the system to a computer.

Words Simon Smythe **Photos** Mike Prior

If there's one thing that divides cycling opinion even more than road disc brakes and Bradley Wiggins's tattoos, it's electronic shifting.

Wiggo's tats are obviously here to stay; disc brakes are already hugely popular with amateurs and are to be trialled in the professional peloton next year, but what about electronic shifting? Although the vast majority of professionals have abandoned mechanical shifting in favour of Shimano's Di2 system and Campagnolo's EPS equivalent (SRAM doesn't have a production electronic groupset quite yet), it seems that six years after Di2 was launched, the every-day cyclist remains to be convinced. It's expensive, heavier, impossible to fix yourself and doesn't make a measurable difference to your performance — those are the most common objections to electronic shifting. So is there

really any need for it outside of pro racing?

To try to answer this question, we've got three bikes built for different purposes each equipped with Shimano's Ultegra Di2 groupset — the commonest and most affordable electronic system, the one that was intended to bring electronic shifting to the people.

At the time of writing, Ultegra Di2's RRP of £1,999 had been slashed to £899 for the entire group, including crankset, brakes, cassette and chain on Chain Reaction's website. So perhaps it's not surprising that the online giant has put together what could well be the most competitive — in terms of both price and performance — Di2 bike available this year. Chain Reaction sponsors the An Post Pro Continental-ranked squad, and the Vitesse has been developed with and for the team riders. For a penny under £2,400, you get the carbon Vitesse frame with the coveted UCI-approved sticker on

it, plus the whole Ultegra Di2 11-speed groupset and Fulcrum Racing Quattro wheels.

Trek's Domane, as ridden by the greatest Classics rider of his generation, Fabian Cancellara, needs no introduction. With a patented 'decoupler' at the seat tube/top tube juncture that works like micro-suspension, this is a bike built for challenging roads. Is the Domane 5.9, paired with Ultegra Di2 and sold for £3,300, the ultimate sportive bike?

Genesis's stainless steel Volare throws something of a curveball into this test. It's really quite novel, and very cool, to create a skinny-tubed, retro-looking frame (in fact it's anything but old fashioned) that's Di2-specific. Distributor Madison, the parent company of Genesis, also has considerable buying power, so £3,399.99 is a relatively low price for such a unique machine made from expensive materials and produced in relatively small numbers.



Battery

The latest Di2 battery is stick-shaped and designed to fit inside a round seatpost, held in with a plug. Shimano also sells the older-style external battery that has its own mount and can be fitted anywhere — under the BB is a favourite. Shimano estimates the battery will last 2,000km between charges, but obviously it depends how often you change gear.

Vitus Vitesse EVO VRi £2,339.99

Shimano Ultegra Di2 6870

The latest version of electronic Ultegra is 11-speed and is fitted to all three bikes in this test. It includes specific shifters and derailleurs and requires a Di2-ready frame with entry and exit ports for wires rather than (or as well as) cables. Some frames are both mechanical and Di2-compatible.

£2,000-£3,000 What to expect

- Di2-ready frame
- Full Ultegra Di2 groupset
- Reasonably good wheels
- Own-brand finishing kit

Vitus Vitesse EVO VRi £2,339.99

All-new carbon machine with race pedigree

Vitus bikes have been back in circulation since 2011, when the formerly French brand was relaunched as Chain Reaction Cycles's house brand. Eighties Irish superstar Sean Kelly took the majority of his wins on board bikes built by Vitus, but Vitus went on to spend a couple of decades in the doldrums until Chain Reaction acquired it. Getting Kelly back on board as brand ambassador was a smart move. Probably just as smart was taking over bike sponsorship of the Pro Continental An Post team that Kelly set up in 2006 to help up-and-coming Irish riders compete in Europe — and that's where the Vitesse comes in.

The flagship Vitus model was built to be raced in Belgium, where the team is based, including over cobbles, but it also had to be suitable for Chain Reaction customers to ride.

Frameset

The 2015 Vitesse EVO is exactly the same frame that the team rides — and sports the UCI accreditation sticker to prove it. It is competitively light — 860g for the size 54cm, according to Chain Reaction. It is made from unidirectional high-modulus Toray T700 carbon, meaning that the fibres can be oriented to improve stiffness or comfort in specific areas of the frame.

The An Post squad wanted a bike that was stiff under power, so the Vitesse is built around an oversized BB386 bottom bracket shell. The beam-like down tube is the full 68mm wide at the cranks. As is generally standard in race bikes, it has a tapered head tube that houses a full carbon fork made from the same T700 carbon.

All the models in the Vitesse EVO range are Di2-compatible, but interestingly the team itself rides mechanical Dura-Ace. Why don't they ride Di2?

Chain Reaction's Simon Cordner explains: "It adds a little bit of weight, and secondly Dura-Ace mechanical is so nice now that there's not much between Di2 and mechanical, in their minds. Mechanics in the An Post squad prefer mechanical bikes so they can strip everything down and make sure it's all fresh for every race. The guys do have the option — some of them in previous seasons have opted for Di2. Maybe next year we'll make a decision and everyone will be on Di2, but... we'll see."

Components

Ultegra Di2 is here in its entirety — including the crankset (52/36t) and brake calipers. The junction box is mounted in the usual place under the stem and the Di2 wire enters the down tube through the left-hand port, with the right-hand one plugged. With the rear brake cable also internally routed, the overall impression is of sleek unclutteredness.

The handlebar and stem are Vitus-branded aluminium and the seatpost, which houses the Di2 battery, is FSA SL-K. the Prologo Scratch Pro saddle is a good, neutral shape.

Wheelset

Fulcrum Racing Quattros are good mid-range clincher wheels with an RRP of £299.99 (Chain Reaction discounts them to £192.99). They're aluminium and feature a 35mm aero rim section. Inevitably that means they're not the





Di2 EXPLAINER

How long does the battery last?

It's hard to say exactly how many shifts the battery will support, but it can go months without being charged. To check its status, there's an indicator light on the side of the junction box under the stem that displays green or red lights, solid or flashing, depending on how much life the battery has. If it goes, the front derailleur stops first. If both go, it's possible to move the rear derailleur by hand to a suitable sprocket to get you home.



Integrated Di2 provides slick shifting

lightest available, with a claimed weight of 1,950g, but they're stiff, aerodynamic and have red anodised spoke nipples that match the Vitesse's graphics, creating a coherent look.

The Continental Ultra Sport tyres are from the lower end of the German company's tyre range and could be upgraded to something like the Continental GP4000 for better performance and ride feel.

Riding

The Vitesse frame and Di2 are made for each other. The snappiness of the lightweight carbon frame is enhanced by the smooth, precise electronic shifts. The big, hollow tubes amplify the sound of the chain engaging with the next sprocket, which enhances the thrill of changing gear at the touch of a button.

The Vitesse is everything a good carbon frame ought to be. The balance between stiffness and comfort is excellent, and the geometry is spot-on. With the steerer uncut and 4cm of spacers under the stem, there's enough effective stack height to achieve a more MAMIL-friendly, all-day riding position, but if the steerer is cut and the stem slammed you've got a real UCI-stickered race bike on your hands. Chain Reaction has achieved its aim of creating a genuine race bike that can be ridden by Joe Public too — though it's unusual that the Di2 version is specced for the public while the pro team rides a flagship mechanical version.

Specification

Frameset UD HM
T700 carbon-fibre
Gears Shimano
Ultegra Di2
Chainset Shimano
Ultegra 52/36
Brakes Shimano
Ultegra
Wheels Fulcrum
Racing Quattro
Tyres Continental
Ultra Sport II
Handlebar Vitus alloy
Stem Vitus alloy
Saddle Prologo
Scratch Pro
Seatpost FSA SL-K
Size range 49-62cm
Weight 8.0kg/17.6lb
www.vitusbikes.com

SPECIFICATION LEVEL	18/20
BUILD QUALITY	18/20
ROAD HANDLING	19/20
RIDE COMFORT	18/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	19/20
OVERALL RATING	92/100

Genesis Volare Stainless £3,399.99

Tradition and technology unite to create a thoroughly modern steel bike

By its own admission Genesis isn't the biggest or the coolest brand, but the company, which is owned by distributor Madison, does manage to straddle the line between Far East mass production — the modus operandi of most bike brands — and a brave artisan ethos.

No self-respecting race team had ridden steel bikes for at least a couple of decades until the Madison-Genesis team rocked up with the stainless Reynolds 953 Volare in 2012. Against the perceived odds it was light and stiff enough to collect an impressive number of wins and podium places in its three years of existence.

This year Genesis launched a range of carbon race frames and the team are now on those. However, the trailblazing spirit lives on, not only in the 953 team frame that Genesis still offers but also in the new Di2-specific Volare Stainless, which is made from double-buttressed MS3 tubing by American company KVA. Although the team have moved on, the public can still benefit from Genesis's unique experience in making steel frames for a modern racing team.

Frameset

According to Genesis, KVA's MS3 stainless steel tubing has the properties of classic Reynolds 853 but is much more resistant to corrosion. Steel might say retro to some people, but the Volare Stainless is thoroughly 21st century. It is TIG welded. It has a BB86 bottom bracket shell that houses press-fitted bearing cups. Its main tubes are oversized for extra stiffness and the chainstays ovalised. It has a 44mm head tube built for a tapered fork steerer.

However, perhaps the most surprising thing about the Volare Stainless frame is that it's Di2 specific — it's not compatible with a mechanical groupset at all, and is only sold as a complete Ultegra Di2 build. This gives it a unique 'steampunk' aesthetic. There are wonderful details such as the fancy diamond-shaped reinforcing braze-on — traditionally used for bottle cage bosses — framing the hole in the down tube where the Di2 cable enters. The same 'framebuilder's flourish' features on the right-hand chainstay where the rear derailleur wire exits.

The fork is full carbon with a tapered steerer — a good decision. The straight-bladed carbon aero fork is not only lighter and better handling than a steel fork, but it also adds to the quirky mash-up of styles.

Components

The bottom bracket and matching chainset are by FSA, but the rest of the groupset is Ultegra Di2, including the calipers. As we've already pointed out, the electronic groupset is beautifully

integrated with the steel frame.

Genesis's own alloy seatpost houses the Di2 battery; Genesis also provides the very minimalist — but comfortable — saddle. The compact bar and +/- 7° stem, also both aluminium, are by Genesis, too.

Wheelset

Fulcrum Racing 5s are a good choice for the Volare Stainless. Madison has spent less on the wheels than Chain Reaction has on the Fulcrum Racing Quattros of the Vitesse, but the shallower rims of the Fulcrum 5s mean a lighter overall weight.

The Fulcrum 5 rear has a slightly deeper section rim than the front to bolster stiffness and this, paired with a large flange on the drive side of the hub, creates a wheel that is adequately stiff.

Specification

Frameset KVA MS3 stainless steel/full carbon fork
Gears Shimano Ultegra Di2
Chainset FSA Energy MegaExo 52/36
Brakes Shimano Ultegra
Wheels Fulcrum Racing 5
Tyres Continental Grand Sport
Handlebar Genesis Road Compact alloy
Stem Genesis Road alloy
Saddle Genesis Road
Seatpost Genesis alloy
Size range 50-60cm
Weight 9kg/19.8lb
www.genesisbikes.co.uk





Ultegra has also been assigned stopping duties

The Continental Grand Sport Race are more expensive tyres than the Ultra Sports of the Vitus.

Riding

The ride quality of the Volare Stainless is so much better than that of original steel frames from the days when steel was the only option — even better than the pro-level steel frames of the early 1990s when technology was beginning to influence tube design. It's not only more comfortable than those bikes probably thanks to its sloping geometry, but is also stiffer under acceleration and feels much more positive to steer.

Its weight of just under 20lb is also comparable with the very best steel bikes of those times but it's heavy compared with modern bikes made from other materials. This inevitably affects the ride experience.

Does Di2 work with a steel frame? Aesthetically most definitely, but we would be tempted to slow the speed of the shifts down. Di2 offers a choice of five shift speeds (you plug it into a laptop to reprogram it) and 'slow' gives a smoother feel more in keeping with the way the Volare might be ridden — i.e. not for ultimate race performance.

Di2 EXPLAINER

Reprogramming shifts

Di2 can talk to computers, and while the system is plugged in (via a port in the junction box that's usually strapped under the stem) the battery will also be charging.

You can customise the shift buttons — and set up more buttons if you wish to fit sprinter's buttons on the drops or climber's buttons on the tops.

There are five shifting speeds to choose from, and it's also possible to specify the number of sprockets the derailleur moves across if you hold the shift button down — i.e. two, three, or keep going to the highest or lowest sprocket — useful if you hit a very steep climb or descent.



Di2: computerise your ride

SPECIFICATION LEVEL	18/20
BUILD QUALITY	19/20
ROAD HANDLING	18/20
RIDE COMFORT	17/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	18/20
OVERALL RATING	90/100

Trek Domane 5.9 £3,300

The ultimate endurance bike electrified and on a budget

Trek Domane's reputation precedes it. This is the bike that was built for Fabian Cancellara to win Paris-Roubaix — which he did, in 2013. Trek's IsoSpeed decoupler — the feature at the centre of the Domane — doubles vertical compliance, according to Trek, and allowed Cancellara to float, rather than batter, his way over the cobbles. This micro-suspension is much more than marketing hoopla: the seat tube is actually separate — decoupled — from the top tube/seatstay juncture, with pivots on cartridge bearings either side that effectively provide a small but crucial amount of travel.

Frameset

Keeping the decoupler company are many more innovative features including DuoTrap — a sensor mounted in the chainstay that communicates via ANT+ with the head unit — and a 'Ride Tuned' seatmast which slides over the seat tube rather than into it, requiring less material at the clamp. There are other clever little details too, such as the integrated chain-catcher and the vanishing mudguard mounts on the rear of the seatstays.

The fork is specifically designed for the Domane, with more rake than Trek's smooth-road racing bike the Madone, but with a dropout angled almost backwards to keep the wheelbase short. There are so many features that we don't have room to list them all, but the take-home message is that none is a gimmick; they all enhance ride quality, whether that's bolstering stiffness or adding comfort.

The Domane is intended for endurance riding, so it has 'stable'

geometry, meaning slacker angles and a larger stack — the height from the bottom bracket to the top of the head tube — for a more upright position. The reach is also proportionately shorter. If you're used to a racier position and are in between sizes, we'd recommend going for the smaller one and fitting a longer stem, because opting for a longish top tube sits you very upright. Our size 58cm also came with a 100mm stem, which is short for that size.

Components

The Domane 5.9 uses an external battery mounted under the BB shell rather than the internal one that fits inside the seatpost — which the other two bikes on test use. Shimano produces both types of battery, as not all bikes have round-section seatposts. However, it's not just the location of the battery that's different. The external version — the older design — doesn't charge by plugging the front junction box into a PC. It has its



DI2 EXPLAINER

Self-trimming

Most people who ride Di2 say they would never go back to mechanical. One of the best things about it, they say, is that you never have to worry about the chain rubbing on the front derailleur. Every time you change gear, the front mech adjusts itself with a little robotic whirr so that the chain is running straight through the middle. Of course 'crossing' the chain — big ring to biggest sprocket and small to small — is still not recommended, but if it happens, at least nobody will hear it.



own dedicated charger that plugs into the mains. This isn't a problem — in some ways it's more convenient — but the downside is that the compatible front junction box doesn't have a port to connect it to a PC. That means if you want to tinker with button reprogramming, change shifting speeds or even troubleshoot glitches (very rare) you have to buy the PC interface (£179.99) and plug it into each component separately.

It's not a dealbreaker, particularly as the Domane is such

a fantastic bike to ride (see below), but the internal-battery version looks cleaner and obviously has more functionality. However, we do think it's a bit naughty of Trek not to say on its website which type of battery and junction box you get.

Wheels

Trek's house component brand Bontrager supplies the Race Lite tubeless-ready wheels. At 1,720g these

Specification

Frameset: 500 Series OCLV carbon-fibre
Gears: Shimano Ultegra Di2
Chainset: Shimano Ultegra 50/34
Brakes: Shimano Ultegra
Wheels: Bontrager RL
Tyres: Bontrager R3
Handlebar: Bontrager Race Lite IsoZone
Stem: Bontrager Race X Lite
Saddle: Bontrager Paradigm RL
Seatpost: Bontrager Ride Tuned cap
Size range: 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62cm
Weight: 7.6kg/16.7lb
www.trekbikes.com



are reasonably light, stiff and with 18 spokes at the front and 24 at the back will be reasonably aerodynamic too. The Bontrager R3 25mm tyres are just right — slick, plenty of volume and supple enough with a TPI of 120.

Riding

The Domane is an incredibly sophisticated bike. Say what you like about big brands, but when they put big ideas and big money into a frame like this — and then hand it to a big rider like Cancellara to demonstrate what it can do — it promises to be a game-changer.

The 5.9, made of slightly heavier carbon than Cancellara's bike, is still the lightest on test by a long way, at 16.7lb. Despite the toweringly tall head tube (19.5cm) of the size 58cm, it handles like a race bike: pin-sharp. Simultaneously, the decoupler arrangement makes the Domane feel as though it's on balloon tyres whenever it hits a pothole.

The Domane is the perfect match for Di2 shifting: both are all about speed and smoothness. And perhaps, because the Domane represents a radical departure from the general perception of what a 'road bike' ought to be, this is the best way to showcase Di2. Trek has rethought the endurance bike and in return we should approach electronic shifting with an open mind. The Domane is a bike whose capabilities are underpinned by professional racing, but it could be tailor-made for the sportiviste who is looking for best possible performance. The same could be said for Di2.



SPECIFICATION LEVEL	16/20
BUILD QUALITY	19/20
ROAD HANDLING	19/20
RIDE COMFORT	19/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	18/20
OVERALL RATING	91/100

A toute Vitesse

To Di2 or not to Di2 — that is the question. Each of these three bikes provides a slightly different setting for Ultegra Di2 which is, as we've noted, the 'entry level' electronic groupset.

With the Volare Stainless, Genesis has shown that electronic shifting needn't be limited to super-light carbon-fibre race bikes fit for the Tour de France. Pairing a modern steel frame with Di2 is a masterstroke — and a talking point — and the Volare is without a doubt the most appealingly idiosyncratic bike here.

Compared with carbon, steel is at a weight disadvantage before you even start building the frame, and therefore there are limits to what can be achieved with it. However, cyclists who buy steel frames are generally not looking for ultimate performance above everything else — they want something a little different, something that tips its hat to tradition, perhaps, a classic that marks them out as more discerning. So if you're prepared to accept that your bike will be at least a kilo heavier than a similarly priced carbon bike, the Volare Stainless is an excellent long-term purchase.

Trek's special one

The Trek Domane is an incredibly sophisticated bike. In a world of 'me too' bike designing, it stands out as a genuine original. It's easy to be sceptical about its IsoSpeed decoupler micro-suspension system, but it's an ingenious and well executed piece of engineering that actually works. The geometry may not be for everyone — especially if you like a lower, racier front end, but for sportive riders it's all their Christmases come at once. Di2 shifting only enhances this.

For ride quality the Domane would win the test but, as we're focusing on its

application of Di2 too, it doesn't score as highly for spec as it might have. It's disappointing that it doesn't have the neater, more sophisticated internal-battery and stem-mounted junction box with the integrated charging port that connects it to a PC. We asked Trek about this and it is certainly feasible to use the stick-shaped internal battery with the Domane's seat cap/IsoSpeed seat tube, so it's possible that in the future the 5.9 will use this version.

However, Trek has abandoned the concept of the 'model year', releasing new products at the most suitable time rather than just before the Eurobike show, so it's difficult to say if and when this might happen. However, it's worth noting that regardless of battery location and front junction box functionality, the shifting itself is exactly the same — brilliant.

Vitus has done a super job with the new Vitesse EVO, for which Chain Reaction has created a brand new mould rather than opting for an 'open mould' design (i.e. one used by other brands). It is already race-proven — it won both Irish national championships in 2014 and got plenty of TV coverage later in the year when An Post's Mark McNally won the King of the Mountains competition in the Tour of Britain.

"The Vitus is a great-riding bike and, provided you can ignore the dull paint scheme, represents the best value"



VITUS VITESSE EVO VRI
£2,339.99



92/100

Spot-on...

- Racy-fast
- Good spec
- Great price

Near-miss

- Boring colour scheme

GENESIS VOLARE STAINLESS
£3,399.99



90/100

Spot-on...

- Feel of steel
- Aesthetics
- Di2 integration

Near-miss

- Overall a bit heavy

TREK DOMANE 5.9
£3,300



91/100

Spot-on...

- Game-changing plushness
- Lightest on test
- Innovative features

Near-miss

- External Di2 battery

The Di2 Vitesse EVO is the exact same frame that the team ride — all models are both mechanical and Di2-compatible — but the classic shamrock green is reserved for the actual team model with mechanical Dura-Ace. The black, red and white is slightly underwhelming — the magnolia of bike colourways — so we had to deduct a couple of points from the build quality score to reflect this. That said, this is down to personal preference and of course it's sensible to go with a neutral scheme if you want to keep the resale value as high as possible (be it house or bike).

The Vitus EVO VRI is a great-riding bike, but it's what you get for the money that clinches it. At nearly £1,000 cheaper than the other two, it arguably offers the best price to performance ratio of any Di2 bike this year.



ALTERNATIVES

For £200 more
**Canyon Ultimate CF SL 9.0
 Di2 £2,599**

If anyone can put together a competitive Di2-equipped bike, Canyon can. The German brand's Ultimate CF line features 'Sport Pro Geometry' which it says emphasises performance while maintaining comfort. This model has the full Ultegra Di2 groupset and rolls on Mavic Ksyrium Elite S wheels.



For £700 more
**Specialized Roubaix SL4
 Comp Di2 £2,999**

Specialized's Classics/sportive bike, the Roubaix, was there before any of them, with more Paris-Roubaix wins to show for it. The Zertz damping system combined with the electronic shifting makes for a super-comfy ride. You don't get the whole Ultegra Di2 groupset, though — the brake calipers are 105.



Or try this...
**Cannondale Synapse Carbon
 Ultegra Di2 Disc £3,499**

If you really want to blow the budget, this sportive superbike not only shifts electronically but stops on hydraulic discs too. Shimano's RR785 Di2/disc brake system has neat electronic shifters with integrated hydraulic reservoirs. Paired with the superb Synapse carbon frame, this bike is something special.



7 OF THE BEST

Summer tyres

Henry Robertshaw upgrades his tyres to test the best rubber the market has to offer

Looking to transform your cycling this summer but don't have the cash to shell out on a fancy new bike or some flashy wheels? One of the most cost-effective ways to upgrade your bike and speed up your riding is to invest in a good pair of summer tyres.

When bike manufacturers are looking to scrape their machines below a certain price point, one of the most common places to look for

savings is the tyres. This means that even if you're spending big money on a flash new bike, it will often come equipped with budget rubber. Naming no names, but it's not unknown for £5,000 bikes to come with tyres costing as little as £15 each.

As your contact point with the road, it's hard to over-emphasise how much of a difference some good summer tyres will make to your

riding. Lower rolling resistance will help you go faster without any extra effort, while improved grip will mean you can speed into corners safe in the knowledge that you're going to come out the other side in one piece.

However, summer tyres won't be able to offer the same level of puncture protection as their winter cousins, so it's worth swapping them out once it gets round to September.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Rolling resistance

This is the level of friction between the tyre and the road, so if you're looking to make the most of your great summer form, you want this to be as low as possible. A good way to judge a tyre's rolling resistance before buying is to look at its threads per inch, or TPI for short. This refers to the size of the threads used in the tyre's casing, with a higher TPI meaning a more flexible tyre with lower rolling resistance, but also less strength.

Grip

Don't be fooled; unlike car tyres, the tread on bike tyres has a pretty negligible effect on grip. Instead it's all about the make-up of the rubber compound, with a softer rubber compound creating a tyre with greater grip when cornering. It's also worth noting that although coloured tyres might match your bike, adding colour to the rubber can compromise grip.

Puncture protection

Unfortunately, even at the height of the British summer when the roads should be at their best, you're always at risk of a puncture when heading out into the lanes. Puncture protection might come at the cost of low rolling resistance, but anything's faster than standing at the side of the road fiddling with tyre levers and a mini-pump.



Bontrager R4 320 **£54.99**

The R4 320, as the name suggests, features 320 TPI, giving a very supple tyre with very low rolling resistance. There is also Hard-Case Lite protection built in, to prevent punctures. Grip in the corners is superb and I am yet to experience any punctures, suggesting that for

summer riding the protection is good. The tan sidewalls are very supple and add a great aesthetic touch to the right bike. One negative is that the bead is pretty stiff, meaning that they can be quite hard to fit on some rims.



Great quality tyres ideal for racing, the only problem is the price



Contact www.bontrager.com

Continental GP4000 S II **£49.95**

To call the GP4000 S IIs summer tyres seems an injustice seeing as they use the same Vectran puncture protection as the bulletproof Grand Prix 4 Seasons, and got me through the whole of last summer without a

single puncture. The Black Chili compound offers impressive grip in dry and wet conditions and they're still one of the fastest tyres on test. They're not cheap but it's easy to find them discounted.

10

Once again Conti sets the benchmark by which all others must be judged



Contact www.conti-tyres.co.uk

Vee Road Runners **£37.99**

Vee might be a name better known to mountain bikers, but I was still fairly impressed with the Road Runners, the company's maiden attempt at a fast, lightweight summer tyre. Grip is good and I was pleased not to suffer a single

puncture during my test period, although I did feel they lacked a bit of suppleness on rough roads, meaning I felt every bump. For the price I would have liked a little more to get excited about.



A good first attempt from Vee although the price is a little bit above par



Contact www.veetireco.co.uk

Vittoria Open Corsa SC **£37.99**

Everyone loves a gum sidewall and these open tubular tyres offer up a great performance upgrade for those summer rides. 320 TPI improves grip and helps lower rolling resistance and you can really feel the benefit of that on twisty, fast country lanes. The

supple nature of the rubber meant cushioning was good, especially when run at lower pressures (under 100psi), on the 25mm wide version we tested. Puncture protection wasn't an issue in the dry but in the wet we experienced a few flats.



A brilliant option for dry summer rides but perhaps avoid in the rain



Contact www.chickencycles.co.uk

Challenge Criterium £52

The open tubular construction of these Challenge tyres makes them, well, a challenge to get onto the rim, but once on they perform superbly. Rolling resistance and grip both come close to matching the performance of a traditional

tubular, and just as importantly the tan sidewalls look great. Aside from the price, the only problem with the Criteriums was their puncture protection, so these are perhaps best saved for better conditions.



Probably the fastest tyres on test, although this comes at the cost of puncture protection



Contact www.palgap.cc

Panaracer Race A Evo 2 £39.99

From the same company that made your TV, camera and stereo, these tyres are a good fit for summer riding on British roads. The casing is supple enough to keep rolling resistance down and grip up without increasing the risk

of pinch flats, and the weight (just north of 200g per tyre) is good for the price. They were a little slippery in wet weather, especially when climbing out of the saddle, but on drier roads they performed well.



A good all-rounder with a low-ish weight, although best saved for dry days



Contact www.zyro.co.uk

Kenda Kriterion £29.99

The Kenda is the least expensive tyre on test, so it's no surprise that it's not the fastest tyre out there. The TPI count of 120 is well below some of the other tyres on test and the sluggish feel and high rolling resistance reflects

that. That said, they were much easier to get on than other tyres and I didn't experience a single puncture during my time on them, even when riding over roads which weren't in the best of conditions.



Not super-fast tyres, but very well priced and easy to live with



Contact www.todayscyclist.co.uk

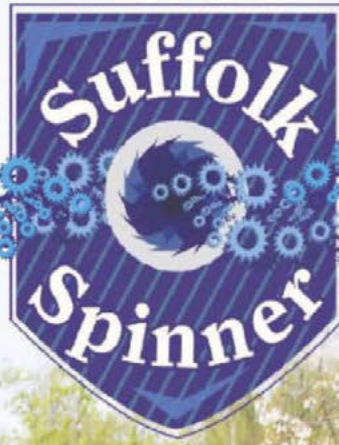
VERDICT

The condition of British roads means that finding a summer tyre is not simply a case of finding the lightest rubber on the market and pressing go. Instead it's all about finding a tyre that will provide low rolling resistance and good grip, without compromising too much on puncture protection.

Once again it's the Continental GP4000S II tyres that set the mark for others to match. The open tubular construction of the Challenge and Vittoria tyres might be faster, but both of these compromise on puncture protection. On the flipside the Kenda, Panaracer, and Vee tyres are all more than sturdy enough to cope with the condition of British roads, but their lower thread count means higher rolling resistance and a lack of zip to keep you at top speed.

The Bontrager R4 320s are perhaps the closest match for the Continentals, but only fall down because of the struggles we had to fit them on the rim and the extra fiver you'll have to fork out, which isn't as easy to get back through shopping around for discounts.





Ready for a spin?

SUNDAY JULY 19
OTLEY COLLEGE, SUFFOLK



David and Goliath go head-to-head

Two machines from either end of the scale, in different materials duke it out

Words Jim Clarkson Pictures Chris Catchpole

Frame

Titanium frame with excellent level of workmanship

Enigma Evoke Titanium

Disc 1.1 £2,699

Gears

11-speed for both, with middle to upper level shifters and mechs

This head-to-head test is a sort of David and Goliath match. We've got the Specialized Roubaix SL4 Disc in the Goliath corner — from a multi-national, world-renowned bike company. And representing David, the little brand Enigma with the Evoke Disc 1.1 hailing from Hailsham, East Sussex and available to buy online and through selected UK and overseas dealers.

Both are modern, disc-specific frames, but built from very different materials. Carbon seems to have become *the* material these days, with aluminium coming in second, steel third, and lying somewhere among them titanium — the light, long-lasting and expensive wonder material.

Our two machines are made of the two more exotic choices, SL4 Fact 8r

carbon for Specialized and titanium for Enigma. The Roubaix has Zertz — a play on 'inserts' — that dampen road vibrations and are claimed to reduce ride fatigue, increase endurance and keep power to the road. The Evoke is a fantastically finished frame, made from titanium — a material that usually offers excellent ride qualities and a degree of inherent comfort without additional features. Both run carbon disc forks.

The bikes are aimed at all-day riding — long days in the saddle, but with no sacrifice to speed, they offer two very different options at a serious price point between £2,500 and £2,700. These are 'no excuses' type bikes, they'll handle all you can throw at them and still roll on. So, who wins out in the two-wheeled tale of large versus small?

Frame

Carbon frame with Zertz damping inserts

Specialized Roubaix SL4 Comp Disc 2015 £2,500

Wheels

Disc-specific wheelsets, with named or own-brand models

£2,500-£3,000
What to expect

- 11-speed groupset
- Own brand with some named finishing kit
- Disc-specific wheelsets

Specialized Roubaix SL4 Comp Disc £2,500

The big S offers up a disc-specific, carbon-framed champion

With worldwide brand recognition and scores of race wins in all cycling arenas, Specialized knows a thing or two about building bikes. The Roubaix name hails from the Spring Classic race — a 250km slog over cobbles and potholes. There are several other Roubaix disc options, but the two nearest this price point are the Elite Disc at around £2,000 and then a jump up to the Pro Disc Race at £4,500.

Frameset

The Fact carbon 8r Specialized has made the Roubaix from also has 'Zertz' damping material inserted into the frame, adding claims of less fatigue and more endurance. It appears on the seatstays, forks and on the CG-R Fact carbon seatpost. The bold, fluid lines of the frame are muscular and lean — the large bottom bracket area with BB30 is the foundation for the frame's feel.

Coupled with the 1 1/8 to 1 3/8in head tube, the frame doesn't waste any effort you lay down — it rewards every pedal stroke as you focus on the road ahead. The own-brand Fact carbon disc fork performed perfectly with little to no twist or judder under heavy braking from the discs, and the Zertz certainly didn't make anything worse. Nicely internally routed cables keep the whole fluid look consistent.

The geometry is definitely aimed at a more upright than down-and-racy set-up, with a fairly high head tube and a generous stack of spacers. A more sporty feel can be created by lowering the bars, but it's generally a comfortable machine for big-mileage days. The 72° head tube and 73.5 seat tube offer a stable ride feel, and tally up well with a bike aimed at potholes and cobbles

IN THE KNOW

Zertz

Adding inserts or a degree of flex into a carbon frame is akin to adding suspension but with drastically reduced weight and more vibration resistance than active travel. There are a few other models appearing with similar technology — La Pierre Pulsium and Trek Domane both offer comparative technology.



One of the inserts used to dampen ride vibrations

It rewards by offering a degree of extra endurance on rides

offering a nicely planted feel when encountering knocks and bumps.

Components

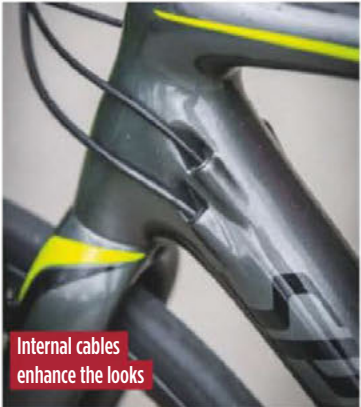
Ultegra takes care of both front and rear mechs while 105 has been allocated to chain and cassette duties. The shifters are Shimano 685 hydraulic disc versions, which are compatible with the middle to upper-end Shimano road groupsets. Discs are a perfect choice for erratic terrain — their reliability and consistency is a real boon on rougher road surfaces. The lever shape is comfortable and offers a superb feel in all braking conditions. The usual expected performance in shifting was smooth and uneventful — which is fine in my book.

A departure from Shimano comes in the 50/34 Praxis Works crank with Turn Zayante bottom bracket. Coupled with the 11-32t cassette, it offered a hill-friendly range of gears that on occasion felt slightly on the low side, but was welcome on one long ride that turned out to be hillier than expected. Stealthy all matt black looks added to the bike's purposeful feel, and shifting was to the level expected with the usual pinned and ramped chainrings.

Specialized's reliable own-brand parts make up the bars, stem, saddle and seatpost — the saddle and seatpost offering a very comfortable platform, with the BG Fit saddle and insert on the seatpost offering a notable reduction in vibration on longer rides. Bolstering the all-round comfort, gel bar tape inserts add another layer without feeling too bulky.

Wheelset

The DT Swiss Axis 4.0 Disc wheels are an obvious economy — they performed



Internal cables enhance the looks

adequately and without flaw, but looked under par for the bike and felt sluggish at times. The tyres were super-reliable Turbo Pro with BlackBelt protection, and rode larger than the 25c size. The frame would happily take larger tyres if desired.

Riding

The overall package of this bike is long-distance comfort, but it also gives speed and zest when riding. The bike transfers power solidly with the large BB area and head tube keeping things on track and in control. It rewards by offering a degree of extra endurance on rides, comfort is a misnomer here perhaps — long rides will always have discomfort, but with the added frame inserts you feel better for longer.

Specification

- Frameset FACT 8r carbon with Zertz inserts, full-carbon disc fork
- Gears Shimano Ultegra 11-speed
- Chainset Praxis Works 50/34
- Brakes Shimano 785 hydraulic discs
- Wheels Axis 4.0 disc
- Tyres: Specialized Turbo Pro 25c
- Bar/stem Specialized Comp alloy
- Saddle BG Toupe gel
- Seatpost: Specialized CGR carbon
- Weight: 8.81kg
- Size range: 54-61cm
- www.specialized.com

SPECIFICATION LEVEL	18/20
BUILD QUALITY	18/20
ROAD HANDLING	19/20
RIDE COMFORT	19/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	18/20
OVERALL RATING	92/100



Praxis Works's
hill-friendly
crankset



Economy: the
DT Swiss
disc wheels



Specialized's
Roubaix SL4
Comp Disc

Enigma Evoke Titanium Disc 1.1 £2,699

The best of British craftsmanship is on show with this beautifully built machine

The small British company Enigma offers up the Evoke Titanium Disc, built up to its 1.1 spec — offering a graceful and classic looking bike, with even the discs looking at home and understated on the bike. The whole bike holds together perfectly and demonstrates the attention to detail that is sometimes missing on mass-market bikes. Enigma offers a ‘sky’s-the-limit’ approach to the bikes, with several build options available as standard, but ultimately anything can be built or added within reason and budget.

Frameset

The main thing you notice on the frame is the welding quality — it’s beautifully repetitive, as are all the finishing details on the frame. The Grade 9 3Al 2.5V seamless double-butt welded titanium tubes are accurately and perfectly put together. The noticeably sloping top tube draws your eye from the 44mm head tube that is compatible with integrated or tapered forks, across to the nicely detailed dropouts; these mount the rear disc cleanly as part of the actual dropout as opposed to being welded on as a visual afterthought. This also means the braking forces are taken by the dropout, not the frame.

The cable routing is all sent via the down tube, and is clean and visually unobtrusive. It also means less curves and snaking — handy for clean shifts. Frame details include the standard English bottom bracket, clamp on front mech and replaceable hanger — all classically styled and functioning. Geometry-wise its 72.5° head and 73° seat tube are in the usual ranges of frames built for all-day riding.

Components

A full Shimano drivetrain offering here, with 105 for all duties including the full-length external cable-actuated brakes — R517 — which perform excellently, despite looking rather industrial and bulky on the bike. Shifting was as good as Ultegra, and will probably keep going as long if not longer. The mechs performed with the

usual Shimano reliability. The rest of the componentry is Enigma branded — a good shaped compact drop bar and a clean looking stem matched the frame for detail and finish quality, with understated graphics.

With a compact 50/34 chainset — in a classy black finish coupled with the 11-32 rear cassette — the gears were hill or long-day-out friendly, and the same slight undergearing was felt on longer, flatter terrain, but in line with the sort of riding the bike excels in.

Wheelset

The Evoke has the excellent Mavic Aksium Disc 1 wheels. Competitively light, with Mavic’s rich wheel-building history and technical knowledge, these are a great looking and riding set of wheels — perhaps slightly under par for the level of bike, but still a serious and durable set of hoops. Keeping things comfortable, the ever-trusty Continental

Ultra Gator Skins in 25c performed excellently and are known for durability and reliability.

Riding

The frameset is a joy to ride, with the compliant feel titanium is famous for, but also never overly pliable or washy, the handling is direct, responsive and feels great mile after mile. It encourages a fluid riding style, and you can often find that great place where the bike feels like it’s not there and you are just flying along. The slightly longer top tube was better for feeling more tucked in, with a slightly more race bike feel — which is good for keeping out of the wind when riding faster, and it still kept the all-day comfort.

There is an attention to detail that is often missing from bikes on the mass market

Specification

Frameset: Grade 9 3Al 2.5V seamless double-butt welded titanium
Gears: Shimano 105 11-speed, 105 11-32 cassette
Chainset: Shimano 105 compact
Brakes: Shimano BR-R517 cable disc
Wheels: Mavic Aksium Disc 1
Tyres: Continental Ultra Gator Skins 25c
Bars: Specialized Comp, shallow drop
Stem: Enigma
Saddle: Enigma
Seatpost: Enigma
Weight: 8.65kg
Size range: 53, 55, 56, 57, 59cm
www.enigmabikes.com

SPECIFICATION LEVEL	18/20
BUILD QUALITY	18/20
ROAD HANDLING	19/20
RIDE COMFORT	19/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	18/20
OVERALL RATING	92/100



Serious and durable hoops



Perfectly welded, seamless tubes



Drivetrain is bulky but does the job



IN THE KNOW

Titanium

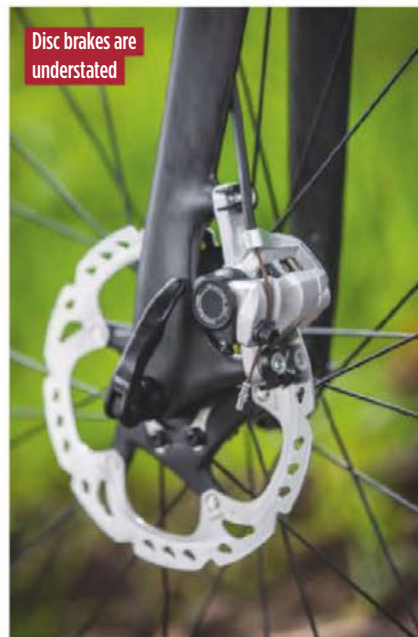
Despite being one of the most plentiful metals on the planet, titanium has always been an expensive material to work with. It’s harder than most to cut, form and shape but, because of production in Asia, the price has been reduced to a more competitive level. Allied to the fact that quality has been maintained, more options have opened up for the consumer.



Geared for a long day



Frameset is given to riding fluency



Disc brakes are understated



A bike that is as good as it looks

And the winner is...

Pitching these two bikes against each other in a little versus big manner has created more of a situation of what is more appropriate for the final use. The Roubaix has modern technology, and is built from a material that is light — but isn't easily fixed. It should, however, be durable for a good lifetime. It also has slightly better shifting componentry than the Enigma but the wheels aren't at the level that they perhaps could be — this being due to current road disc wheelset limits.

It rides fantastically, and rewards every extra pedal stroke. Looks-wise, its fluid but unique style plants it firmly out as a giant (even a Goliath perhaps) among bikes.

The Evoke has its classic lines, it is still up to date with geometry and discs — slightly lower spec mechs, with 105, but these don't affect the heart of the bike. It's a shame to see cable actuated brakes, but they still perform well, and are easier to maintain and fix. It'll be more of a perception issue. The ride of the Evoke is responsive and even inspiringly lively, and the titanium frame will outlive all the parts — this is really a bike for life. The Evoke is hand finished and this shows in the build — it's immaculately put together.

No losers

The more time ridden, the more the personalities came out from the bikes. The Roubaix feels big brand, it has the obligatory upgraded rear mech, a slightly niche crankset and subtle colours that will appeal to a wide demographic. It also has the ride softening features which add to the technological and scientific approach Specialized applies to all its bikes. It'll take you up, over and down all types of roads, and also some 'not quite roads', cobbles, potholes and more.

The Evoke is a bike that is timeless, the titanium frame will look good year after year, and the whole bike is built on tried, trusted but refined principles. This is off the peg but has the custom feel to it. It would serve as an excellent base for all sorts of riding, most likely sportives or perhaps fast Audaxes, but in all honesty it'll be happiest just out there on the road, finding miles and hidden lanes.

Both bikes will serve the rider well — it'll just come down to what you feel is the right bike for you. Big brand technology and science, or smaller, perhaps better attention to detail and a feeling of uniqueness. But this tester feels that David wins out again — the Evoke just edges it on ride feel.

**CYCLING
ACTIVE
BEST BIKE
ON TEST**



**SPECIALIZED ROUBAIX
SL4 DISC £2,500**



92/100

Spot on...

- Hydraulic discs
- Technological additions

Near miss

- Wheelset feels cheap

**ENIGMA EVOKE
TITANIUM DISC 1.1
£2,699**



93/100

Spot on...

- Attention to detail
- Inspiring ride

Near miss

- Spec could be higher

3 OF THE BEST

Women's summer gloves

Just as dogs aren't just for Christmas, gloves aren't just for winter — we need them in the summer too, for grip and comfort. CA reviews three pairs of women's warm-weather mitts

Words Hannah Bussey

With warmer days upon us, our thoughts turn to shedding the numerous layers of clothing that have kept us alive throughout the colder months. Having had our hands wrapped up since the end of last year, it's tempting to shed gloves entirely as soon as temperatures start to rise. But gloves remain essential, as they offer protection from the sun, padding to prevent blisters and even crash protection.

Lightweight long-finger gloves rule out sunburn and provide a modicum of crash protection. Full-length gloves wick away sweat, preventing fingers from slipping on shift and brake levers on hot and sweaty or showery rides.

Fingerless gloves, known as track mitts, often provide a comfier fit, as finger length is no longer a consideration, and enable you to maintain full dexterity for bike control and picking items from your pockets on the move.

Because women's hands are generally smaller than men's, finding the best possible fit and performance can be challenging. Everything needs to be that bit slimmer and narrower; a size small or extra-small in a men's glove isn't always good enough for the discerning, petite female cyclist.

So we've done the hard work for you and found three of the best summer cycling gloves for women.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Fit

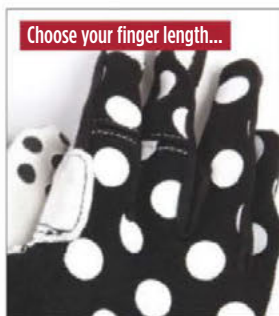
Recall the phrase 'to fit like a glove' when trying on. Cycling gloves need to be tight but not restrictive. Too loose and the padding may slide into the wrong place and impact negatively on handlebar grip by creating fabric folds. If fingers are too long, they may catch on shifters and brake levers. If gloves are too small, they may chafe or pull uncomfortably on fingernails, or create a restrictive web between thumb and forefinger, limiting your radial-palmar grasp of the bars, while again putting padding in the wrong place.

Padding

Padding needs to allow a confident grasp of the handlebars while reducing vibration and friction in three key places: heel of hand, thumb pad and top of palm, just below fingers. Too much padding may impinge on radial-palmar grasp, and too little may not dampen vibration. As with saddles and shorts, glove padding is a personal preference, so when trying on, carry out a handlebar and shifter check — it's not foolproof but will give you some useful feedback.

Features

A feature common to all these gloves is a 'nose-wipe' (AKA 'sweat-wipe'). This is an area of soft towelling fabric on the thumb or forefinger with which to wipe your nose or brow. Other features to look out are ventilation holes, touch-screen compatibility (on long-finger gloves), wrist closure and reflective detailing.



Sugoi RC Pro £24.99

With multiple fabric panels and mesh between fingers, these track mitts are very structured and the most ventilated on test. Reasonably close-fitting, with both raw and over-locked sewn edges meant bulk was minimal, and kept hand and finger movement unrestricted. Padding was a sensible size, and when combined with the silicone details on top, enabled us to get a confident grip of the bars. We occasionally

fouled our proboscis on the rubber/Velcro wrist closure when using the soft nose-wipe, but caused no harm.

A good-value, sensibly padded track mitt offering a good fit and decent comfort

9

www.cyclingsportsgroup.co.uk

**CYCLING
ACTIVE
GROUP TEST
WINNER**



Giro LA DND £26.99

Medium-weight nylon gloves that worked well across a range of temperatures, these provided wind-chill resistance and sun protection. Perhaps a little warm for the hottest days but very versatile. A clever finger construction at the knuckle on the first and second fingers and thumb meant that, despite the tight fit, pulling on brakes and shifting wasn't a problem. The nose-wipe was a good size, and the silicone touch-screen dots worked perfectly. We achieved a

good grip thanks to minimal padding on the suedette palm, although some may find it a little too minimalist. The only downside was that they're handwash-only.

This smartly designed glove may be a little too warm for the height of summer

9

www.giro.co.uk



RECOMMENDED

Mavic Cloud £19

This simple Lycra track mitt was a great fit and kept our hands cool on even the hottest of days. The foam padding, while appearing rather beefy, was perfectly positioned to keep vibration and calluses to a minimum. The nose-wipe is on the small side, and my nose caught on the edges of the reinforcement between thumb and forefinger, becoming slightly sore. The rubber Velcro wrist closure provided a perfect closure, but it occasionally snagged on

my jersey when dipping a hand into my rear pocket to snatch out provisions.

A simple, comfy track mitt whose only failing is a slightly skimpy nose-wipe

8

www.mavic.co.uk



**CYCLING
ACTIVE
BEST ON A
BUDGET**

VERDICT

With hundreds of pairs of women's gloves on the market, we carefully cherry-picked these three. We chose these ones because each of them delivers in terms of fit and performance. The Mavic Cloud lost a couple of points for its small nose-wipe and its wrist closure catching on my jersey, but at £19, it offers excellent value for money and I'd certainly consider purchasing it. The Sugoi RC Pro was almost my dream track mitt — if it had a fabric Velcro closure or a pull-on design, it would have scored 10/10. Nonetheless, the Sugoi is a perfectly dependable summer mitt. I totally fell in love the Giro LA DND, which ticked almost all the boxes required of a long-finger cycling glove. It's a reasonable price, too. If only there were a version of the Giro we could bung in the washing machine with all our other kit, it too would earn full marks.



Upgrade your bike

You may be hankering after a new bike, but if your budget won't stretch that far, a few choice upgrades can transform your favourite machine into something faster and flashier

Words Oliver Bridgewood

Upgrading your bike can breathe life into your pride and joy, reigniting that feeling of excitement you had when it was new. You may love your bike but after a year or two there are usually a few things that either need replacing or upgrading.

This could involve relatively affordable service items such as chains and brake blocks, or it could be part of a bolder plan to improve your bike's performance. It could also mean altering the look of your bike — even small changes here can make your bike stand out from the crowd.

Budgets vary and how much you spend is down to you, but upgrading your bike can still be a lot of fun even if you are only spending a few quid on small parts, such as bar tape or brake blocks.

Stock bike

One of the most popular bikes in the UK is the Giant Defy. As such, we took a year-old Giant Defy Composite 1 that we tested in 2014, and decided to give it a make-over. The bike cost £1,599 — however, it is on offer online currently for £1,299. This makes the upgrades even more affordable if you bagged one at a discounted price.

The Composite 1 is a great bike that features a superb carbon frame designed to suit sportive and endurance riders. It's stiff in the right places, but the seatstays and seat tube absorb vibrations, ironing out the road, resulting in a very comfortable ride.

Shimano's high quality Ultegra components make up the 11-speed

Why upgrade?

- Lighter means faster
- Added quality
- Improved looks
- Feels new
- Impress your mates
- It's fun!

drivetrain right down to the compact chainset.

However, this bike isn't perfect. The Giant P-Elite wheels, while strong, are heavy, and the Giant branded P-R3 tyres don't have the best puncture protection. Similarly, the brakes are unbranded Shimano calipers and don't do justice to the rest of the spec. We are not exactly bowled over by the red bar tape that's used either.

What we said

"The ride is smooth but the trade-off is that it feels sluggish compared to its rivals. At a touch over 8kg, it's heavier too. The Defy may not be the quickest bike on test but it is notably stable thanks to its longer wheelbase," is what we wrote in 2014, giving the Defy 8/10.

Go to www.cyclingweekly.co.uk for the full test report. 





Brakes

Stock bike: Shimano BR561 (360g pair)

Upgrade: Shimano Ultegra 6800 (340g pair) £54.99

Weight saving: 20g

www.madison.co.uk

The original brakes on the Giant are non-series Shimano calipers. With the rest of the spec being Ultegra, it made sense to upgrade the brakes to bring them in line with the rest of the groupset on the bike.

Top-end Shimano dual pivot calipers offer fantastic braking, which is noticeably superior with enhanced modulation to cheaper budget calipers. The Ultegra calipers are also significantly lighter than those originally on the bike. It is common for bikes to be equipped with lower spec brakes, so it may be worth considering whether to upgrade. Change one or both but if your budget only stretches to one, then replacing the front caliper is the most sensible option.



Saddle

Stock bike: Giant Performance Road (337g)

Upgrade: Fabric Scoop Saddle (266g) £39.99

Weight saving: 71g

www.fabric.cc

Riding a road bike shouldn't be uncomfortable, yet many people continue to stick with their current saddle, despite consistent discomfort. Bike saddles come in a huge range of shapes and sizes. This is for good reason as everyone's different — one person's leather armchair could well be another's rusty razor blade.

A new saddle can be a really cost effective way of making your bike lighter, too. When choosing a new saddle coordinating its colour with your bar tape is always a good look. The Fabric saddle we have chosen comes in a variety of lengths and widths, so you should be able to find a shape that suits you.



Swap your wheels
and save your
bike some weight

**Giant Defy
Composite 1:
8.1kg
After upgrade:
7.8kg**

Wheels

Stock bike: Giant P-Elite C (2,070g)

Upgrade: Fulcrum Racing 3

(1,558g pair) £449.99

Weight saving: 512g

www.i-ride.co.uk

Manufacturers commonly 'under-spec' wheels to save money, and for £300-£500 there are a lot of options that will do justice to the quality of your frame and groupset. We chose a pair of Fulcrum Racing 3s, lighter than the current wheels by 512g, and stiffer, too, meaning they transfer power more efficiently and accelerate faster. The Fulcrums are durable and more than capable of withstanding pothole impacts. We transferred the Ultegra cassette to the Fulcrums, as well as the inner tubes.





Get the right saddle and avoid discomfort

Bar tape

Stock bike: Giant (red)

Upgrade: Pro Gel Bar

Tape £14.99

www.

madison.co.uk

Even professionals like it when the team mechanic puts new bar tape on their steed. Comfort can be improved too, with some tape being more padded. If you are looking to revitalise your bike for the summer, then peeling off your tired and grubby bar tape is a sure-fire way to do it. New bar tape is also an inexpensive way of adding some personality to your bike, with a huge range of colours and patterns available. We have chosen black, to match our new saddle, creating a smart look.



Tyres

Stock bike: Giant P-R3 (340g)

Upgrade: Bontrager R4 320 (230g) £54.99

Weight saving: 110g

www.bontrager.com

If you have had your bike for a year or two, it may be worth investing in some new rubber. Once your tyres have become worn, they are more prone to punctures, potentially spoiling a big ride or sportive. In addition, many bikes come fitted with 23mm tyres. By upgrading to some 25mm — or even 28mm if you have sufficient clearance — you can increase comfort substantially and enjoy less rolling resistance, too. Despite being wider, they have a smaller contact patch, meaning slightly less friction than a narrower tyre so, for the same energy, they go faster. The only penalty is a slight increase in weight.

When choosing tyres, think about the kind of riding you will be doing. Wet and wintry weather will require more puncture protection. Tyres need not just be purely for function either. With manufacturers offering lots of different colours, we have chosen tan sidewalls for their classic look.



VERDICT

These modifications have transformed the Giant Defy Composite 1

- The bike looks great, making us excited to ride it, but crucially the performance has been improved.
- The biggest difference is the wheels. Less weight and more stiffness means improved acceleration and more direct handling, while changing the saddle and tyres has substantially improved comfort.
- Depending on your budget — these are only suggested upgrades after all — any one of the new parts we have chosen will improve a stock machine.
- Upgrading your current bike will cost way less than replacing it. It will also give you a bike that's unique to you, that's tailored to your own personal requirements.
- Giant Defy Composite 1 upgrade scores 10/10.





The Love of fixed gear

Described as the “purest, simplest” kind of bicycle, *Julian Sayerer* explains why it doesn’t get any better than riding fixed-gear on the road

Photos Dave Noakes

Sheldon Brown was a much-loved, bespectacled, bearded bicycle mechanic, from Massachusetts, USA. He started the eponymous website now renowned among all bicycle mechanics and tinkerers the world over, and it is not simply the case that what Sheldon Brown did not know about bicycles was not worth knowing; many of the things he did know about bicycles were also not worth knowing.

With an encyclopaedic knowledge of the bicycle and its many intricacies, you could tell Sheldon Brown delighted in the detail of the machines most of us are content to simply ride. As much as anything, he was passionate about infecting others with his love of the bicycle and through his website, you could sense the joy he

took from sharing his knowledge so that you understood what he was talking about, not by emphasising (as some mechanics like to) that you didn’t.

Because of this devotion to all things bicycle, it has always struck me as quite significant that Brown referred to a fixed-gear bicycle as: “The purest, simplest kind of bicycle.” That a fixed-gear is simple is beyond dispute — it is only a cog, no




The Reasons Cost

The cost of running a fixed-gear bike is delightfully low. Your bike is ready to go with little more than a frameset, wheels and a drivetrain, and although a straightforward singlespeed shares most of these advantages (apart from, advisably, running a rear brake) that doesn’t make it any less satisfying when your new bike, or your full service, costs a fraction of the figure you remember it used to.

freewheel, and a constantly turning wheel and set of pedals. The fact, however, that Brown also referred to it as *pure* (rather than backwards or impractical!) often comes to mind as high praise by someone who was quite clearly as in love with all things bicycle as any who came before or after him.

Not just for hipsters

It is not surprising that I have a high regard for Brown’s high regard of fixed-gear bicycles because, simply, I think he is right and it is useful to have a more authoritative figure than me to say so. Riding a fixed-gear is, to my mind, the highest form of bicycle. Now that the craze for fixed-gears that came around in 2008 has let up, and you no longer need to suffer the embarrassment of people nodding at you approvingly and calling your bicycle ‘a fixie’, there is nothing to do but get on with 



The Reasons Joy

I suppose it is down to the individual, but for many there is no purer form of riding a bicycle. The absolute connection to the road, the ability to make tiny adjustments of speed in precise accordance with the wheels, the sense of purpose when you’re motoring along a flat and both you and the bicycle both seem to want to go faster. It’s worth a try.

enjoying the ride, the pedalling, and those moments where old cyclists out and about will stop you and laugh that they haven't seen such a bicycle since they were young.

Learning the ropes

It would be a lie to say that I have been in thrall to a fixed-gear since I first stepped on one. In the early weeks of riding my first, nobody had told me the chain would need tensioning, and so mine fell off to trap between sprocket and frame on a number of frustrating occasions. Another early moment, at which the pedal descended to a height below that of the kerb, meant my bicycle pirouetted towards London traffic and provided another less than euphoric moment of riding fixed. When I visit the hilly city of Brighton, or most places outside the mostly flat city of London, I feel that anybody riding a fixed-gear in a hilly area must be about as

peculiar as anybody *not* riding one in a flat part of the world.

More painfully, I remember the young lad who once wheeled his fixed-gear — handles bare apart from grips — into a bicycle shop and stood beside me at the counter. He had scabs across his nose, the sides of his mouth, up to his forehead. He bought a brake lever. Everybody waited politely until he'd left the shop before a dry laughter rippled out.

It is not that a fixed-gear bicycle is completely without its perils. But perhaps what eventually makes it such a satisfying form of riding, are the minor adjustments one goes through in getting used to differences that soon come to feel more natural than even a freewheel. More than this, people are wont — as is often the case in general, but doubly so where anything bicycle seems to be concerned — to overstate the dangers of riding a fixed-gear. There is a certain unnecessary and unpleasant bravado that comes attached to bikes without a freewheel, which on the opposite side of things seems to create an

“People are wont to overstate the dangers of riding a fixed-gear. This is unhelpful and generally just wrong”

The Reasons Technique

Because freewheeling and pushing big gears are both bad habits for your muscles, a fixed in the right gearing helps you optimise your muscles, especially the crucial and cherished slow-twitch variety. Touring in Austria, a young road cyclist once pointed at the cassette on the rear of my bicycle, and laughed that in his club they were only allowed one gear until they were 16. You are never so good at maintaining momentum and carrying speed into hills as when riding a fixed.

The Reasons Efficiency

That the pedal and wheels keep on moving, once you've got used to it, actually comes to feel much more convenient than inconvenient. The pedals help to begin each new pedal stroke at the end of a long ride or long day. Because when the cranks are vertical you have least leverage over them, this point of the pedal cycle is also that where the helping hand is most useful. Not having the option to shift gear makes you realise how much time and energy you waste considering whether or not to do so.

The nonchalant trackstand is a must-have fixed-gear skill



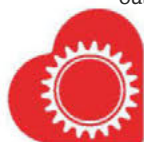
equally unnecessary desire to label the things de facto as reckless and dangerous. Both opinions are unhelpful and generally just wrong.

Just like any bicycle, before riding a fixed it can be useful to try it out in a safe and perhaps traffic-free space. Whereas some will eventually ride a fixed without any brakes, and many opt for just one, it can be a good idea to at least start out with both a front and a rear brake, until you develop a knack for shifting your body weight forwards and resisting the pedals in lieu of a rear brake. Some may choose to ride both a fixed-gear and run two brakes; certainly when working as a courier, it was often nice to have the lazy option of two levers to slow my speed when much of the day was spent going down steep ramps into loading bays.

If you are going to ride with only one brake, it helps to spend some time getting the hang of this approach to



braking, and it can be useful to practise your technique on a low-friction surface (gravel or even grass work well) where the bicycle will skid more easily and help you figure out how it is done.



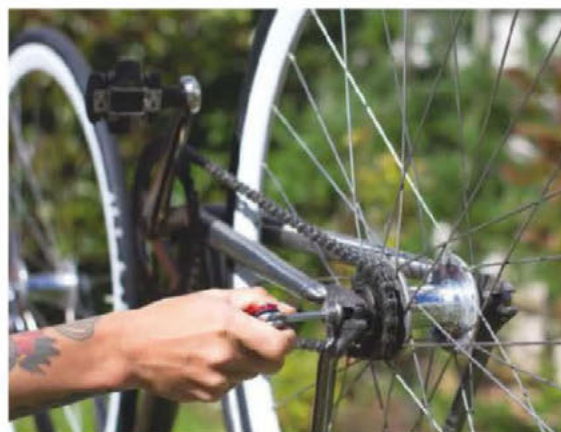
The Reasons Maintenance

It's no coincidence that I started riding fixed when I started working as a courier. You don't have a cassette or jockey wheels to clean, only one brake lever/pads/cable to keep in shape, and on the countless daily moments when you watch your bike toppling over as you dash for a delivery, your worry is only scuffed bar tape rather than a derailleur bending horribly back towards the spokes.

For best examples of this technique, online videos from world courier championships and other similar events will often feature competitions for the longest skids — with some riders managing to top 50 metres and true experts getting up to 100.

Fixed interest

Once you figure out the braking and constant pedalling, in my own experience there has been very little going back from fixed-gears. Riding them you come to realise how crude a means of stopping a brake lever clutching at a rim was all along. You realise there is actually surprisingly little need to stop pedalling when you ride, only to become better at watching the road ahead of you (for traffic or terrain) with a calmer appraisal. You enjoy riding along on the back of a bicycle, as it motors with its own momentum, now and then allowing the pedals to push playfully upwards at your feet.



Above: Maintaining the correct chain tension is vital

There will still be those moments, for example on a long downhill, where the constant, high cadence turning of pedals becomes impractical and a freewheel suddenly doesn't seem like such a bad idea. But different bike rides bring with them different types of bicycle, and a fixed-gear is certainly worth its minimal, low-profile place in any garage or overcrowded hallway. **End**

ASK CYCLING ACTIVE

Welcome to Fitness Q&A, where our coaches and nutritionists are on hand to help you. Each month, we answer your queries, problems and dilemmas so you can enjoy your cycling worry-free. Send your questions to robert.hicks@timeinc.com

CA EXPERT



This month, Level 3 British Cycling coach Rob Mortlock answers your fitness questions

Post-ride puzzle

Q Should I feel invigorated after a ride? I always hear people say that they feel alive after a bike ride. But for me it's the opposite. I'm spent and just want to go to bed! I've been riding a bike for a year now. Does this change?
Danny Heath, Surrey

A Many people do feel invigorated after exercise, it's true. Then again, if you read post-race interviews with professional riders, you'll notice their exhaustion. After a year of regular cycling, you should have noticed improvements in your general fitness, though this may not be immediately obvious. You may have heard people say, "it never gets easier, you just get faster".

With this in mind, you could look to see how the intensity of exercise is affecting your fatigue. You may need to make a conscious effort to go easier or do shorter rides for a couple of weeks, to see if it brings your energy levels back up. Several other factors aside from exercise intensity and duration can also contribute to tiredness: your general health, nutrition and hydration, lifestyle or stress.

If you think your excessive fatigue is caused by an underlying health condition, you should consult your GP. If you have a clean bill of health, you should begin by taking a look at your hydration and nutritional strategy. Make sure you are eating the right things at the right time; crucially, carbohydrates to keep energy levels topped up before and during the ride. Ensure you are taking on the right amount of water before and during the exercise too.

As well as a warm-up at the start of your ride, it's equally important to include a proper cool-down, designed to bring the body back to its resting state gradually. Try and make sure you're getting enough sleep in the days leading up to your ride and that external stresses from work, family, etc, are managed appropriately. Even small improvements in all of these factors can make a big difference in how fatigued you feel after riding.

Clipping-in query

Q For my birthday, my wife bought me a road bike. Quick question: do I need clip-in pedals? I haven't ridden a bike for over 15 years. Some of my friends tell me that flats are no good. How much of a difference does it make?
Dan Thomas, Kent

A The advantages of clipping-in on a road bike generally far outweigh the disadvantages. Although the increase (if any) in performance during steady-state riding on the flat may be negligible, the ability to better exert force on the pedals throughout the crank revolution can help with climbing or sprinting. Cornering and descending at speed also requires good purchase on the pedals, and a wet, twisty descent down a hill or mountain doesn't seem like a very appealing prospect on slippery flat pedals with no grip.



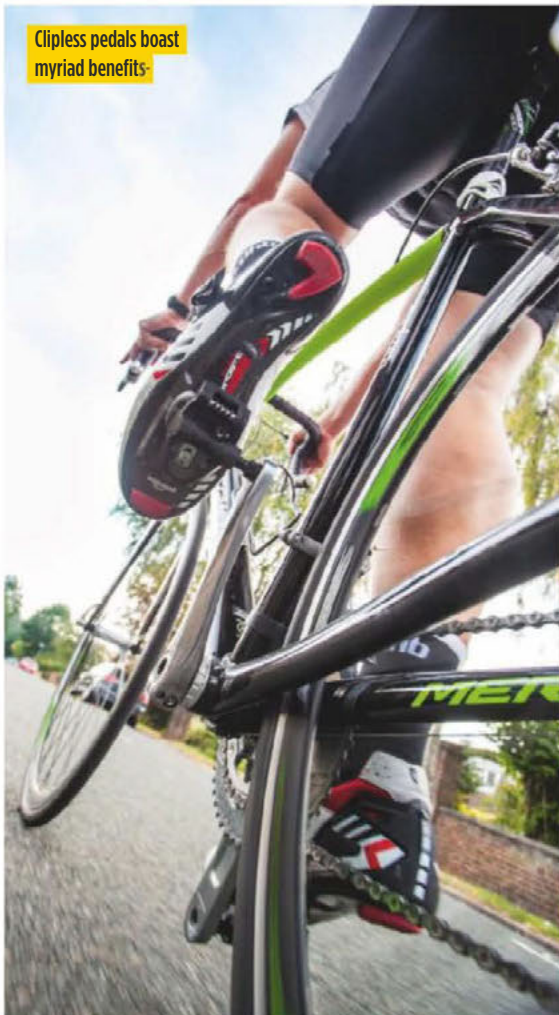
Perfect your pedalling action

The construction of the shoe and positioning of the foot are crucial factors. Clip-in (usually called clipless, having replaced old-fashioned clips and straps) shoes are usually quite stiff and close-fitting, reducing flex and compression of the sole. The cleat position can be fine-tuned to keep your foot at the optimal point on your pedal for comfort and performance.

Road cycling clipless systems are designed especially to provide this lightweight yet stiff, stable platform. Although some flat pedal and shoe combinations available are excellent for off-road bikes, they are unnecessarily heavy and bulky on a road bike.

Many riders, especially commuters, start off with MTB-style clipless systems. The advantage is that both sides of the pedal can be clipped into, often making the initial clip-in easier for novices. Off-road clipless shoes are also generally easier to walk around in. Pure road

Clipless pedals boast myriad benefits





or saddle design is going to rectify this, so the root cause should be addressed with strength and flexibility exercises. The riding position should be adapted so that the trunk becomes strong enough to support itself, reducing the amount of weight placed directly on the saddle. This also achieves a more aerodynamic position, an added bonus.

I doubt that single-leg pedalling drills would be a particular contributor to ischial pressure, as it doesn't really affect the weight bearing in a significant way. Although single-leg pedalling drills are useful for correcting particular biomechanical deficiencies, it depends entirely on the individual. I wouldn't necessarily recommend single-leg work as a predominant part of a training plan for someone who already has a reasonably rounded and equal pedalling action.

Regarding pedalling technique, this is a very contentious subject. In many instances, the practicalities of cycling get lost in the scientific argument. I would look at the demands of the cycling discipline and how and where a more rounded distribution of power would be advantageous. Although it's accepted that the vast majority of a cyclist's power is produced on the down-stroke, pedalling against a high gear in a sprint or climbing at low cadences up a very steep incline are scenarios where, as you suggest, riders pull up as well as push down.

I remain open to the suggestion that the efficiency of power distribution around the crank revolution depends on the individual rider, the amount of force and the level of cadence required at the time, and the rate of fatigue experienced.

systems are single-sided and not designed for walking. For leisure riding and commuting with frequent stops, the MTB system may be better, but for long training rides, sportives or racing, a proper road system is the way to go.

Pulling my leg?

Q At least one article in your magazine has suggested that there is no benefit at all to be gained from 'push-pulling' or pulling up on either pedal with the 'off-stroke' leg. But I am sure you will agree with me that it is impossible, during single-leg training drills, to pedal one-legged without pulling up on the shoe/cleat/pedal. My question is: does one-legged pedalling place too much pressure on the pelvic area and/or sit-bones?

If 'push-pulling' is deemed to be of no benefit, then why do we

all spend significant sums of money on clipless pedals and shoes to match? If pushing is the only efficient technique and effort needed, then toe clips and straps would surely suffice to keep our feet secure on the pedals while pushing. I'd welcome your comments and views.

John Williams

A Several studies have highlighted pressure on the ischial tuberosity caused by cycling. The most recent found that the largest contributor to ischial and perineal compression was the riders' body weight, with flexibility and pelvic tilt angle being the other important factors.

This doesn't necessarily mean that riders who suffer with these issues are too heavy; it's about how your own bodyweight is distributed around the bike. Poor flexibility and pelvic tilt can cause a rider to sit more upright, placing more weight on the saddle. No amount of padding

CA recommends Science Fitness GlycoSource



Science Fitness has developed a hydration product to help athletes get the most out of their sporting pursuits from training to high-end performance.

The conveniently sized 25g sachet, containing 17g of carbohydrates, eliminates the tedious task of measuring out powder before an event, which leaves more time to focus on the event itself.

The GlycoSource sachets can be taken before, during and after your ride. One unit (25g) mixed with 500ml of water prior to and every 30 minutes during your sporting event and two units within 30 minutes of completing sporting activity will help 'Beat the Bonk'. Coming in three flavours (Very Berry, Caribbean Crush and Mandarin Zest) there's a wide choice of tastes.

www.sciencefitness.co.uk £23.88 per 12 single serve 25g

9 ways to save 500 calories

Here are nine ways that you can either burn an extra 500 calories or save 500 calories to help you on your way to your summer weight loss goal

Words Hannah Reynolds Photo Jesse Wild Illustrations Jason Hardy

1 Ride your bike (obviously)

An hour of cycling at just 12mph will burn around 500kcal for a 70kg man.

Just riding 1mph faster will burn an extra 100kcal. The exact number of calories burnt depends on the intensity of your effort, your body weight and composition and how you have fuelled before your ride. Make this easy paced ride an extra in your week, go pedalling with your kids or take the long route to work on your commute.

CALORIE BUSTER 60 minutes riding at just 12mph = 500kcal

2 Have an ice-cream

If you enjoy a sweet treat then you might be pleased to know that a Mars Bar ice-cream has 100 less calories than an ordinary Mars Bar. Get a box of Mars Bar ice-creams in your freezer and you'll be saving 500kcal for every five you eat — just don't eat them all at once. Or you could just have an apple.

CALORIE BUSTER Swap five Mars Bars for five Mars Bar ice-creams = 500kcal

3 Move more

When we think about burning calories we tend to imagine sweaty, hot exercise but simply moving more in our everyday lives is the biggest way of increasing our metabolic rate and daily calorie burn. In fact research shows that those who do a hard exercise session burn less calories the rest of the day because they are taking it easy recovering from their training. Every time you move from sitting to standing it takes 3kcal of energy so stand up more often! Stand up to answer the phone or stretch occasionally. Natural fidgets expend an extra 500kcal a day just by tapping their toes and restlessly moving. Just be warned it might annoy your colleagues!

CALORIE BUSTER Fidget instead of sitting still = 500kcal a day

4 Juice say no

Having a glass of orange juice feels like a healthy choice but drinking lots of fruit juice can add up to a lot of calories and a lot of sugar. 250ml of orange juice has more calories in it than a can of Coca-Cola. A raw orange has just 70kcal and you will benefit from the dietary fibre as well as the juice. It's easy to knock back several glasses of juice a day and at 120kcal per large glass it adds up. Stick to water and peel an orange.

CALORIE BUSTER 10 glasses of orange juice swapped for 10 oranges with a glass of water = 500kcal

5 Lunch break

Far too many of us eat at our desks, and if you work in an urban area you won't have far to go to buy your plastic sandwich or soggy salad. Lunchtime is a huge fitness opportunity, even if you only have a short break available. For a start

6 Core work

We frequently talk about the importance of exercising off the bike and in particular working on your core muscles that help provide stability to your upper body when cycling and are a platform for your legs to push against. If you've got a weak core you are wasting power as it leaks out through the minor wobbles and tensions in your upper body. A simple session of squats, planks and press-ups is a good starting point. Each of these exercises work several muscle groups and they can be done just using body weight and at home. Just 15 minutes a day will improve your cycling and burn 500kcal a week. Incidentally there are 15 minutes of ad breaks during a typical length movie or docu-drama, so you might be able to get more from that time than just putting the kettle on!

CALORIE BUSTER 15 minutes of squats, planks and press-ups = 500kcal a week

PLANK

Lie face down on the floor. Tuck your toes under, bend your elbows and rest your weight onto your forearms and not on your hands. Push up so your body should form a straight line from shoulders to ankles. Engage your core by sucking your belly button into your spine. Hold. You should be able to manage two minutes but start with 30 seconds.

PRESS-UPS

Lie face down on the floor. Tuck your toes under and place your hands just outside of your shoulders, fingers facing forwards. Extend your arms to lift your body off the floor. Your elbows should be straight but not locked, hold for a second, and then as you exhale lower back to the floor. Repeat. Build up to ten.

SQUAT

Stand tall with your feet shoulder width apart, feet facing forwards as they would be if cycling. Interlink the hands in front of the chest. Breathe in. As you exhale bend both legs into the squat, tracking the knee in line with the second toe. Think about dropping the hips back and down but don't stick the bottom out — the spine stays lengthened and in 'neutral' (with its natural curves intact). Inhale to return to standing. Remain looking ahead throughout. Repeat 10 times.



7 Up your intensity

Few of us have the time to increase the number of hours we spend cycling per week but we can do more with the time we have. Thirty minutes of gentle riding will burn between 200-300kcal depending on body weight. Turning that into an intense interval session or faster ride will burn an extra 200-300 calories. See our suggested session. If you haven't got time to go further you have to go faster to get an extra calorie burn. Do this twice a week and you will notice the difference

CALORIE BUSTER 30 minutes of intervals twice a week instead of easy riding = 500kcal

INTERVAL SESSION TO TRY

Each block only lasts eight minutes but give yourself a full four-minute recovery before starting again, if you are completing more than one set. In the first minute go as hard as you can for 15 seconds then recover for the remaining 45 seconds to complete the minute. In the second effort go as hard as you can for 30 seconds then recover for the next 30 seconds; 45-second effort then 15-second recovery then go all out for one minute followed by one minute recovery. This is the 'top' of the steps. You then begin the descent with a 45-second effort with 15 seconds of recovery and repeat the pattern till you complete the set.

Time	Zone
15 seconds	5
45 seconds	1
30 seconds	5
30 seconds	1
45 seconds	5
15 seconds	1
60 seconds	5
60 seconds	1
15 seconds	1
45 seconds	5
30 seconds	1
30 seconds	5
45 seconds	1
15 seconds	5

TOTAL: 8 minutes

This block of eight minutes can be repeated up to three times — don't forget to include a thorough warm-up and warm-down.



bringing in your own lunch saves money and makes sure you have something healthy and nutritious to look forward to. It's also an opportunity to get up and move around. Ideally you would be able to squeeze in a short bike ride or a run but even if you don't have the facilities to do this a 20-minute brisk walk will improve your posture, burn some calories and workers who go outside at lunchtime are more productive in the afternoons.

CALORIE BUSTER 20-minute walk, five days a week = 500kcal

8 Sleep it off

This one is slightly tenuous as extra sleep does not mean burning more

calories but there is an important association between weight loss and sleep.

Just an hour less sleep than you need per night can cause weight gain of slightly under 1kg in one week. There are numerous reasons why this might be the case. Sleep loss can affect our hormones, increasing the amount of grehlin and reducing the amount of leptin we produce. Grehlin is the hormone that tells us it's time to eat and leptin is the one that signals when we have had enough and it is time to put the fork down. Get the balance wrong and you will eat more than you need and not stop when you have had enough! Being too tired to exercise is also one of the key reasons people give for missing training. Sleep more to help

manage your appetite and be more active during the day.

CALORIE BUSTER 70kg man sleeping for 7 hours = 500kcal

9 Lose the latte

A medium full-fat milk latte from a high-street coffee shop is 200kcal. One of those every morning on your way to work is 1,000kcal a week — that's nearly a third of your 1lb of fat right there! Swap to a skimmed milk latte to save 500kcal a week, or switch to a calorie free americano to save the full 1,000kcal.

CALORIE BUSTER Full-fat to skimmed milk in your latte = 500kcal a week



**CA meets two men who,
having been convicted of
drink driving, turned their lives
around with the help of cycling**

Words Rebecca Charlton **Photos** Mike Prior & Russ Ellis

Riding the road to recovery

Cycling is a powerful tool for weight loss, fitness and wellbeing, and in the cases of Chris Wilson and Richard Hardy, it turned out to be all that and more. In their cases, it was life-saving.

After respective drink-driving convictions and huge wake-up calls, both Wilson and Hardy realised that they needed help to make a change. When driving bans left both of them without their every-day mode of transport, they turned to bikes to get around, and this for both of them developed into a healthy love affair with cycling. Riding bikes played a key part in their recovery from drinking alcohol to excess, and they've never looked back.

Richard Hardy's story (left): "Cycling helped me recover from alcoholism"

"I had always played football, golf, cricket and kept fit," explains Richard Hardy, 41, from East Yorkshire. But he had also always struggled with alcohol dependence and depression.

In 2011, he lost one of his friends to cancer and the balance started to shift — he was no longer winning the battle.

"My relationship broke down as I struggled to cope with the death of a third friend. When Matthew passed away, it hit me hard," he says.

"In the December of 2011, I crashed my car and was arrested for drink driving. I was then banned for 18 months and kept my job with Volkswagen by the skin of my teeth. I sank into a deep depression. I began a course of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) after previously having counselling."

Alongside the therapy, Hardy had had a stab at getting fit but admits it was a half-hearted effort.

"I had been doing the RPM classes at the gym on and off for a while and quite

enjoyed it but never took it seriously. When I was banned from driving, a friend gave me her mountain bike, which I used a few times but mostly I would get lifts to work and didn't help myself."

Motivational reading

However, in 2012 things started to improve for Hardy and he started to feel more positive.

"I started going to RPM classes more, watching the Tour and Wiggo-mania. Around this time, I also started reading *The Chimp Paradox* by Dr Stephen Peters (the former Great Britain Cycling Team psychologist). Things started to look better.

"However, in the October, I slipped on a step at a wedding, knocked myself out, and ended up in hospital. A blood clot led to three weeks off work and again almost losing my job.

"It was at this point I said to my brother, a big cycling fan, 'Can you help me find a bike?' My family bought me a bike for my birthday and Christmas and, bit by bit, I started riding.

"Slowly my confidence came back, I could go places and I felt free. I began reading about cycling; the Lance Armstrong case had come out and I wanted to know everything.

"I also began to take a bit of control. I cycled on Christmas day. I didn't have to rely on people as much. I cycled to work every day, went out on a weekend and loved it. Suddenly, I didn't enjoy playing football anymore; I preferred the bike."

New goalposts

"By the July, I had a new bike, had completed the Coast to Coast, among other rides, and cycling gave me a purpose. It helped with my therapy. I replaced the Friday night post-work drink with an RPM class and I cycled 250 miles in two days with work for charity. My friend Matthew who died of cancer had said to us all, »

'Raise all you can for the Teenage Cancer Trust' (TCT).

"Last year, I did another marathon and several sportives, including riding the stage-one route of the Tour de France, raising over £2k for the TCT. I was due to do Ride London but broke a bone in my foot falling off my bike. So I will be doing that this year, along with many more miles. I also help with Teenage Cancer Trust collections and events.

"Looking back, I wonder how I survived without cycling. Even when I got my licence, back in Feb 2013, I decided not to get a car, and I don't think I will.

"I associate cycling with my recovery and I can honestly say I don't know where I would be without it. When I'm stressed or something bad happens, I no longer reach for the bottle or a cigarette. I pull on my bibshorts, put on my heart-rate monitor and head out. I have also met some great friends through cycling. It really has changed my life for the better."

Chris Wilson's story: "A drink drive conviction changed my life for good"

Five years ago, Chris Wilson, now 26, from Suffolk, spent his time being 'one of the lads' and with that lifestyle came drinking to excess. He admits that every weekend was spent going out and getting drunk with his group of friends. Everybody he surrounded himself with was fuelling an approach to life that wasn't sustainable — but it was becoming hard to see the error of his ways. He was young and loving life.

With the weekends of boozing came a diet that he excused as hangover remedies. It's easy to overeat when you're tired and run-down from a night on the tiles. This became the norm, and meanwhile his weight reached 15-and-a-half stone.

"I couldn't see it at the time, but I was getting more and more overweight from the excessive drinking and poor diet," says Wilson.

His life hadn't always been like this; as a youngster, he'd been fit and healthy.

"I always loved cycling. When we were 15, we set up our own MTB team called Team Buckled Wheels," he laughs. But once into his 20s, Wilson's lifestyle had become far removed from his mountain bike days and everything was spiralling out of control.

Wake-up call

Weight gain, however, was to become the least of his worries.

"On my friend's 21st birthday, the drinking came to a head. I drove home from his birthday party and crashed my car," he explains. He was later arrested and convicted of drink driving.

"I'm lucky to be able to say no one was

"Richard no longer reaches for the bottle or cigarettes; he heads out on his bicycle"



Drink-aware

If you need help with a drinking problem, you can either phone the Alcoholics Anonymous national help line on 0845 769 7555 or contact help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk.

Chris Wilson and Richard Hardy were both on a path to ill health due to their relationship with alcohol and it affected their judgment behind the wheel, but their respective stories were very different.

It may not always be obvious that you're drinking

too much or depending on alcohol. If you're unsure, visit www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk for more information or take the anonymous self-assessment at www.drinkaware.co.uk to find out if you're at risk of alcohol affecting your health and well-being.

injured," he says.

It was a huge wake-up call for Wilson, who was subsequently banned from driving for 20 months. There was, however, one immediate and positive outcome: he stopped drinking and revisited his old friend, the bicycle.

"Cycling was my only mode of transport to work and back. I did the 30-mile commute every day, come rain, sun or wind. It was hard but the more I got into it, the more I could see I was enjoying every moment."

New lease of life

Today, Wilson is a new person. He's back to loving cycling and is slimmer and fitter than ever before.

"I've lost three stone since the conviction and I now weigh 12.5 stone."

Not only has he shed the pounds but he's completely smitten with cycling.

"I now have an ever-growing collection of bikes. It's up to five so far and counting! I still commute to work every day, even though the car sits on the drive. And as for the drinking, I hardly touch a drop.

"Has cycling has changed my life for the better? More than I thought possible."

Healthy mind

Stephen Buckley, head of information at mental health charity Mind, said, "It's a well known fact that exercise is good for physical health, but many people are surprised to hear that it's great for mental health too. Regular exercise, such as cycling, lifts mood, can help deal with negative

emotions and improves self-image.

"Exercise is particularly effective in reducing anxiety, with studies showing that just one session can result in at least a brief improvement in symptoms, while regular activity may have a longer-term effect.

"There is also evidence that exercise can have the same antidepressant effect

as some traditional forms of treatment, including psychotherapy and group therapy sessions.

"Regular physical activity also reduces the physical symptoms associated with many mental health problems such as depression, with exercise helping people to sleep better, reducing feelings of stress and fatigue, and improving energy levels."

"Chris has quit drinking, cycles 30 miles to work every day and has lost three stone"



The Big Pedal

CA's Laura Laker visits a London school to find out more about the Sustrans initiative getting more kids on bikes

Words Laura Laker Photos Roo Fowler

For many, the school run is a far from pleasant experience. Despite the average commute to school being only 1.5 miles, a distance easily travelled on two wheels, only four per cent of kids are currently allowed to do so.

That's not to blame parents. Fear of the roads is the number one parental concern deterring walking and cycling to school, while a lack of knowledge about cycle routes makes driving seem the only option. As a result, an estimated one in five cars on the road in the morning rush hour is on the school run.

Sustainable transport charity Sustrans is trying to change this, with its annual Big Pedal event. Funded by the Bike Hub levy scheme and backed by Olympian Sharron Davies MBE, the event aims to get more kids cycling and scooting to school through promotion and education, competitions, and, for the best-performing schools, prizes.

CA visited Singlegate School in South-West London, one of the Big Pedal's success stories, to see what effect it has had on pupils and their parents. At 8am, the cul-de-sac at the front of the school is remarkably calm and quiet, with not a car in sight. We soon find out why.

Singlegate is bordered by Colliers Wood Recreation Ground, which many parents use for their commute by bike, scooter or foot. This happy triumvirate of a traffic-free route, the school's tiny catchment area, and a supportive head teacher help explain why, on one of Singlegate's recent car-free days, it achieved 88 per cent car-free commuting.

Head Nathalie Bull says: "At Singlegate, most children should be able to cycle and scoot to school. Last academic year, the furthest admitted child came from 725m from the school."

Each school logs how kids travel each day and submits it to Sustrans before 4pm, so the scores are constantly updated. Kids might not pedal in every day, so the school's total score is based on the percentage of journeys scooted and cycled over the 10-day event.

For the Big Pedal 2015, Singlegate Primary School came third in Greater London and 26th nationally, with an average 70.6 per cent of pupils scooting or cycling.

Maggie is head girl and one of Singlegate's four junior travel ambassadors. These ambassadors help encourage their peers to travel independently as they transition from primary to secondary school, getting involved in anything from carrying out assemblies and conducting surveys to helping complete the school travel plan.

Maggie says she discovered a love of

Emma Cale with Sofia

Fifty per cent of the time we cycle to school, the rest of the time we walk. I don't mind walking but I prefer cycling really — it's quicker, because she is quite slow to walk! We are about 600m from school, but a lot of people are closer. It is really safe, it is just down one road and through the park. There's plenty of space on the pavement but crossing the road is more difficult; we have got only 10 seconds for crossing, so it would be nice to have more time to cross with children. At our old school, it was not as good; we had to cross a busy high street.



cycling when she was given a new bike, and now cycles to school daily with her dad.

"I started cycling and really liked the feeling. It is really fun and it doesn't take as long as walking.

"Today it took about eight minutes but it can be up to 15 depending on traffic."

Though there are fewer cars outside the school during the 10 days of the Big Pedal, traffic levels remain a problem further away from school. Maggie and her dad have to avoid busy roads on their commute and there are many roads she can't ride unaccompanied. "I would like less cars on the roads so I can ride on the roads more," she says.

Giving bikes priority

Mrs Bull says: "We would love to be able to transform the road the school is situated on into a pedestrian-only road at some point in the future to encourage even more walking, cycling and scooting to school."

THE BIG PEDAL 2015 IN NUMBERS

3,669,907

the number of miles cycled and scooted to and from school

1,000

tonnes of CO2 not emitted

2,000,000

the number of car journeys swapped for cycling and scooting

£642

the amount parents save on average each year by ditching the car for walking, cycling or scooting

Ako with Donae and Teo

We live in Morden, and drive usually but we've been cycling for the whole of the Big Pedal so far. Cycling is good for the fresh air. I don't mind parking further away — we leave the car at Sainsbury's, about 200m away. We tend to do this more in the summer time, and if the kids are good!





39%

said that pupils who took part were noticeably happier throughout the day

76%

said that pupils continued to cycle and scoot to school following the event

24%

said that pupils who took part had improved concentration levels

Sign up via the Big Pedal website bigpedal.org.uk. The site has a registration page, where you can register a single class or the whole school but make sure you discuss it with the school before signing up!

Of course many schools around the country face far worse traffic conditions than Singlegate. Mrs Bull is also headmistress of William Morris Primary school, three miles to the south-east. With its larger catchment area and busier roads nearby, encouraging active travel is a much harder task. Although Bull is keen to promote cycling at William Morris, she is constrained by very real and difficult logistical and safety concerns.

"We need to ensure, while we are encouraging children to cycle and scoot, that they remain safe first and foremost and, for some children and families, distance does not always support this," she says.

"We are currently in the process of reviewing the safety of the road the school is situated on and are looking at the possibility of speed restrictions such as a pedestrian crossing and speed humps to allow

Nadeem Bhatti with Anam and Alza

For the past three weeks, we have been cycling every day. Usually we walk. It is much faster; that is why I like to travel more by bike, especially with the little one. It's about a mile, and we take a detour to cycle through the park. The kids enjoy cycling as well. Now they want better bikes, so that is the issue for me!



Ashok Sarroy with Layla

We don't live very far away, so we only have to go through the park and along the pavements on quiet roads. We cycle every so often, the rest of the time we just walk. We have seen an increase in cycling over the last few years. It is becoming much more popular.



for safer travel on the roads around school."

Sustrans accepts that more than encouragement is needed to get more kids cycling, walking and scooting the school run instead of driving. The charity says this is a role that only government can play, by making dedicated funding available for cycling in the long term, transforming local cycling and walking routes and lowering traffic speeds.

The power of cycling

A keen sportswoman, Mrs Bull uses sports to encourage positive behaviour and healthy lifestyles among her pupils, of which active travel is a part.

Throughout the year the school runs 'spotlight on sport', focusing on different activities, from football to running.

Children file neatly into the hall in rows for the morning assembly and a talk from Lee, a sprinter headed for the Rio Olympics in 2016. A regular visitor, he describes the importance of training and the positive mental attitude that makes a good athlete, as well as running classes for the kids during the day.

Mrs Bull says: "We find that the children's attitude to fitness has changed since taking part in the Big Pedal, and this, along with our school sports drive, has an impact on not only children's physical and emotional health but also their well-being and self-esteem.

"We would like to be able to offer better and increased cycle and scooter storage to our families, so that they are more confident in leaving bikes and scooters on the school premises. We also find that the incentives offered have a positive impact on children coming to school by bike and scooter.

"Incentives do sometimes include prizes, but mostly it is the encouragement from other children and the reinforcement of the health benefits of active travel."

End

Energy gels

This month *Cycling Active* samples seven of the best energy gels to help fuel your long rides

Words Robert Hicks

A motorcar can't run without fuel. It doesn't matter how big the engine is, how much horsepower it has, or the size of its wheels. Without a tank full of petrol, it won't budge an inch.

The same logic can be applied to your body. You can train hard for months and build your aerobic capacity. You can work on your core strength and be in the best physical shape as possible. But come the day of your big ride or sportive, if you don't fuel properly and replace what's lost, you will come to a grinding halt, throwing months of preparation and hard work out of the window.

Many cyclists don't take their nutrition seriously enough, or get it wrong, confused by conflicting advice. But help is at hand; it really isn't difficult.

What do I need?

Glucose is the carbohydrate used for energy and is stored in the liver in the skeletal muscle as glycogen. But the body can only store so much glycogen, 500g (2,000kcal) to be precise and as the exercise intensity increases, it will run out. So it needs replacing.

Fat provides the main bulk of energy during low to moderate cycling but it can't be broken down as quickly as carbohydrates. When that hill

approaches, you want to put the hammer down or perhaps catch up with the guys in front, the muscles will need a faster supply of energy, calling upon its glucose and glycogen stores. And if you don't have enough stores to call on, well, you get the picture.

That's why energy gels are so useful, providing an instant hit of energy in small volumes for when you need it most. So it's a good idea to find one that you like.



NEED TO KNOW

Under 90 minutes

The need to replenish glucose stores isn't paramount, as you should have enough stored already to fuel your ride comfortably.

Over 90 minutes

Moderate to intense efforts over 1.5hrs requires fuelling. Research states that the body needs 30-65g of carbohydrates per hour to replace what's being lost and maintain performance.

Over 65g

While studies have indicated that consuming a combination of both glucose and fructose increases the delivery of carbs to up to 90g per hour, this is only really necessary at the elite end of the cycling spectrum. It also takes practice. For amateur cyclists, up to 65g will suffice and won't cause stomach upset.

SIS Go Energy Pineapple £1.29

Each gel, with 22g of carbohydrates, will provide significant fuel for your muscles to feast on. It's perfect for a long ride. Each isotonic pineapple gel, which doesn't need to be taken with water, tastes great, and is surprisingly refreshing and not too sweet. It also contains traces of salt that will help combat dehydration. Unlike some other gels, this is light on the stomach, and

causes very little, if any, stomach problems. It's certainly one of the best tasting gels on test.

A great gel perfect for long rides



www.scienceinsport.com

PowerGel Original £1.40

PowerBar is the official nutritional supplier to the Tour de France, so it must be doing something right. The PowerGel, which has an easy-to-open packet, contains 27g of carbohydrates and uses a 'C2MAX Dual Source Carb Mix' that contains a special ratio of glucose and fructose sources, which allow the body to absorb fuel at a faster rate. Each gel also contains 205mg of sodium to help replace the salts that have been lost through heavy sweating. However, like the Honey Stinger gel, its texture is quite thick, and is a tad too

sweet. You will need to drink water when consuming this one.

Contains a special ratio of glucose and fructose that allows the body to absorb fuel at a faster rate



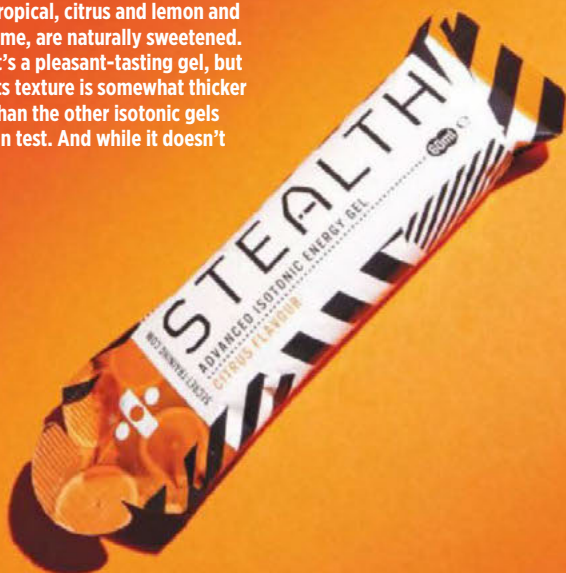
www.powerbar.eu

Secret Training Stealth £1.25

This isotonic gel, which is vegan-friendly, doesn't need to be taken with water and contains a number of transportable carbohydrates, delivering energy quickly to muscles. Its ingredients include maltodextrin, fructose and sticky rice starch. All of these gels, which come in a variety of flavours such as tropical, citrus and lemon and lime, are naturally sweetened. It's a pleasant-tasting gel, but its texture is somewhat thicker than the other isotonic gels on test. And while it doesn't

cause stomach issues, its consistency may not be to everyone's liking.

An effective, pleasant tasting gel but its consistency may be too gloopy for some



www.secret-training.cc

Honey Stinger £1.35

It may be the smallest gel on test, but this is one of the strongest, providing 23g of carbohydrates in just one 32g sachet — ideal if you want to take a few with you on your ride. However, in order to make such a powerful gel in such a small quantity, the consistency of the product does suffer. The texture is extremely thick and quite difficult to consume more than a couple on your ride. Its fruit

smoothie flavour is sweet but not unpleasant. It's the consistency that will turn you off before the taste.

One of the smallest gels on test but one of the strongest... and thickest



www.honestinger.com

OTE Energy £1.45

We didn't think many gels could compete with SIS in the taste department, but we've found one. This naturally flavoured carbohydrate energy gel, which is full of fruit juices, contains 20.4g of carbohydrates as well as 28mg of salt. Its texture, a thin consistency, is easy to consume and places no stress on the stomach. It's quite sweet, without being sickly. OTE has also designed a unique packing system allowing cyclists to either sip or gulp down the gel, depending on where it's opened. Opening a gel on the

go can be tricky and is a skill you need to master, yet OTE has successfully solved this issue — this is very easy to open.

A gel that contains real fruit juices and places no stress on the stomach

www.otesports.co.uk



CNP Hydro £2

CNP is the official nutritional sponsor to Team Sky, so you'd hope for a marginal gain from this one. Each CNP gel, which contains coconut water, providing natural energy and super-runny consistency delivers 22.9g of carbohydrates to the working muscles. CNP provides two flavours to choose from, pineapple and passion fruit, both of which contain salts to aid hydration and B vitamins to promote health. Both flavours tick all the right taste boxes, and ditto texture and

sweetness. It's hard to find much wrong with this gel. Recommended.

Provides natural energy and a super-runny consistency

www.cnpprofessional.co.uk



High5 Energy £1

A simple yet effective gel containing 23g of carbohydrate, real juice flavours and no artificial sweeteners. This gel is also caffeine-free, easy to carry and open and contains no gluten. Its consistency may be a tad too thick, but it's not difficult to consume and is sweet enough without becoming sickly. There are no fancy gimmicks with this gel. High 5's no-nonsense approach makes fuelling

simple. Consume one an hour along with real foods, fluids or a bar and you'll easily keep topped up.

A no-nonsense gel that provides a simple solution to fuelling

www.highfive.co.uk



VERDICT

While the nutritional content of each gel is massively important, taste also plays a significant role. Mindful of this, CNP, SiS and OTE have taken the rider's nutritional requirements into consideration and combined with great taste. Not only that but all three are light on the stomach and in our

experience cause very little, if any, gut distress. We've found it almost impossible to pick a winner between the three — there really isn't much separating them — so for that reason, we're giving the crown to all three of them. Pick your own winner from the winners!



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15 ways to make this your best summer yet

Getting fitter and faster on the bike doesn't have to be complicated. Follow our top tips and this will be a summer to remember

Words Robert Hicks Photos Jesse Wild

For all those who are looking to go faster this summer — which is pretty much all of us — these tips and tricks are for you. You may not think it, but it really is the little things that can make all the difference, especially when it comes to speed and improved fitness.

Take a look at these handy tips and start implementing them into your weekly bike rides. Before you know it, you will be flying!





05 The social network

Once you've been to work, caught up with friends then spent time with your family it leaves very little time to get out on your bike. So why not combine the two? Cycling with friends or colleagues at the weekend, or commuting to work, are great ways of ticking a couple of boxes; socialising and getting the miles in at the same time.

01 Ride backwards

Don't try this on the road! According to research, pedalling backwards is very effective for strengthening the quadriceps and hamstrings — major muscles used when riding. Studies have also shown that it can improve aerobic performance.

02 Wiggle

During your ride, every so often wiggle your toes. It ensures you are relaxed, which will keep the blood flowing to your feet for good circulation, limit tension that may cause cramping and fatigue and makes you remain supple so that you can absorb the bumps and turns of the road. While riding, it's important to keep relaxed. Being tense will have a negative effect on your bike handling.

03 One-leg pedalling

Single-leg pedalling on a stationary bike is a great way to improve your speed and strength. Learning to pedal a complete 360-degree circle with both legs working together will make you a better rider. To practise cycling with one leg, unclip one foot and rest it on a chair next to the bike so you are left to pedal with only one leg. With the bike in an easy gear turn the cranks at a comfortable cadence. Try not to stomp; focus on a powerful but controlled downstroke and smoothly bring your foot back up to the top of the pedal stroke. At first you may only last a few seconds before the hip-flexors fatigue, so when that happens switch to

the other leg. When this one fatigues, clip both feet in and pedal for a few minutes, applying what you have learned in the single-leg pedalling drill. Repeat this drill for 10 minutes or until you tire.

Variety is the spice of life

04 Mixing your training will not only make you a better cyclist but will also stop you from

Above: Socialising and cycling go hand in hand

Below: Varying the terrain, duration, and intensity of your rides will improve your performance

getting bored. Mix things up by doing long, steady rides some days and short one-hour rides the next, with some short, hard hills or some short, fast sprints. You can also use a variety of gears so you're not always rolling around in the same comfortable gear. Remember, change is a good thing. Working your body the same each day won't yield any different results. On your next ride, change things by riding for 10 minutes in a low gear, so you're spinning the legs, then rest and ride another 10 minutes in a big gear that will improve your strength and glute (buttock) muscles.



“Remember, change is a good thing. Working your body the same each day won't yield any different results”



06 A helping hand

If you don't have any means of measuring your performance then it's worth investing in some training aids. Even a basic heart-rate monitor records your distance and speed. This sort of data is easily measurable and enables you to compare training rides. If you are going to go to the effort of following a training plan, then having the tools to measure and record will make your sessions more effective.

07 Love hills

A sure-fire way of improving your fitness and speed is hill training. It's tough, but it will assist with power and speed, while improving your fitness levels, fast!

Try this: warm up for 10 minutes as you find a hill that's long enough and hard enough to keep you challenged and interested. Then set yourself a goal to get up it a certain number of times in a certain amount of time. It's simple but effective. Do this once a week.

08 Intervals

It can be easy to just sit on the bike and pedal, pedal, pedal for hour after hour. Yes, you'll have great endurance but there'll come a time when you will stagnate because you're mostly training the body's energy systems in one way and



Build a rapport with your local hills

at one pace. Now is the time to crank your riding up a notch and add some interval training into your repertoire, and you'll soon start to see accelerations in your fitness and speed on the bike. Try the plan opposite...

Busy roads aren't conducive to this sort of training so do it either on a stationary bike in the gym, or in a park where you can let rip for a minute. Spinning classes are great for this.

Time	Effort	% Max heart rate
0-10 minute	Zone 1	60-65%
1 minute	Zone 4	82-89%
1 minute	Zone 1	60-65% (Repeat for 20 mins)

09 Recovery

To ensure you've fully recovered for your next session, make the most of your post-ride recovery. 30 to 60 minutes after your ride is a prime time as far as nutrition and muscular recovery is concerned, so fuel as soon as practically possible. A failure to refuel could lead to muscle damage and you even falling sick.

When it comes to recovery nutrition, you need to take note of the three Rs: rehydrate (water and electrolytes), replenish (energy/carbohydrates) and repair (damaged muscles/protein).

Research states that the body needs at least 20g of protein to initiate the recovery process. And while real foods are far tastier and more nutritious than formulated products, a recovery shake is a handy to thing to have immediately after your ride. A standard recovery drink will contain up to 25g of protein as well as carbohydrates, sodium and minerals.

Real foods containing 10g protein

- 2 small eggs ■ 1 cup milk
- 40g skinless cooked chicken



Unscrupulous post-ride feeding: recovery has its perks...

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3 Essential exercises to try at home



10 The squat

Strong knees equal a stronger performance — simple. So train your hips and knees to work together by doing three sets of 15 squats three to four times a week.

- Start with your feet slightly wider than your hips. Your toes should be pointed forwards — never inwards.
- Look straight ahead, pick a spot on the wall, and arms straight out in front of you.
- Breathe in, start to lower by bending at the knees, and push your bottom back. Keep your back and hips straight.
- Breathe in and engage your core. Seventy per cent of your weight should be on your heels.
- Lower until your hips are level with your knees. Hold momentarily before driving back up.

“Hill training will improve your fitness. It’s tough but will increase your power, fast!”

11 The plank

Just because cycling seems to use mostly leg muscles doesn’t mean you should neglect your core strength. A strong core will help you to keep a good posture while you ride, especially when you’re out of the saddle and tackling a big hill. It will also ensure you stay steady in the saddle, limit the amount of rocking and provide a stable platform for your hips and glutes to work from. The plank is just one exercise that you



can do at home, outdoors, or in your office — providing you don’t mind a few odd looks.

- Lie down on the floor and push yourself up onto your elbows.
- Keep your elbows beneath your shoulders and tuck your toes under to maintain balance.
- Keep your back straight and don’t let your bottom drop. Keep your stomach tucked in.
- Hold for 30 seconds and repeat three times before resting for 30 seconds in-between.



12 The lunge

Cyclists have extremely overworked hip flexors, tight quadriceps, hamstrings and a vulnerable lower back. A regular stretching routine will help improve range of motion, flexibility and suppleness. While there is very little research to state that stretching will reduce the risk of injury, dynamic stretches — putting a muscle through its full range of motion without holding a prolonged stretch — have been shown to improve performance. The low lunge is great as it will engage the glutes, which are vital for cycling, and help loosen and lengthen the psoas muscles (lower back) and mobilise the shoulders.

- Slowly lunge forwards with your hands by your sides. Lower your body until your back knee almost touches the floor. Hold for one second.
- Squeeze your glutes as you stand upwards, bringing your rear foot forwards.
- Repeat on opposite side, 10 times.

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13 Recovery part two: rest

Rest and recovery is where the body adapts and strengthens. Get it right and you'll improve as a bike rider. Get it wrong, and your performance will plateau. But many cyclists get R&R wrong. It doesn't mean lying on the sofa, scoffing chocolate. It means treating tired muscles so they're ready to take on their next big challenge. A foam roller, for example, is a worthy investment, as it will help massage damaged muscle fibres, breaking down any knots that may limit range of motion and ease aches and pains. Foam rollers will also assist with circulation, promoting oxygenated blood flow to muscles that need it most.

14 Enjoy yourself

It can be very easy to get so caught up in training, so much so you forget why you initially started riding a bike. Remember, bike riding is fun. That's why we all do it. Never forget the reasons for cycling and don't take yourself too seriously. The moment you start to enjoy it is the moment when the results will come.

15 Keep on spinning

Being able to pedal quickly and efficiently is a core cycling skill. You'll be able to ride quicker, you'll

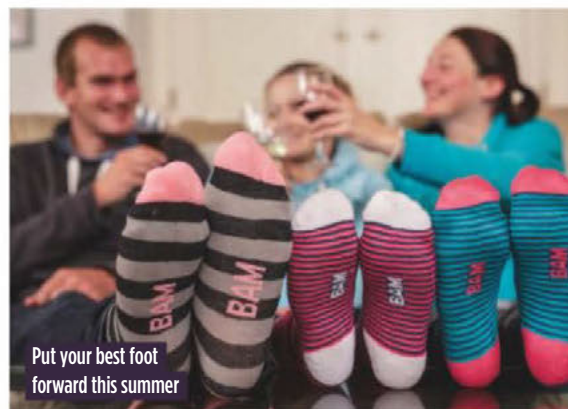
British Cycling's training zones

Effort	You can	It feels like you're	Use it for...	%Max heart rate
Easy Zone 1	Chat freely	Warming up	Warm-ups, cool-downs and recovery	60-65%
Steady Zone 2	Speak one sentence at a time	Riding along in the bunch on the flat	Long rides	65-75%
Brisk Zone 3	Speak a few words at a time	Breathing deeply and working hard	Long efforts of 10 to 20min	75-82%
Hard Zone 4	Say only one word at a time	Really attacking (perhaps on a climb)	Efforts lasting 2-8min	82-89%
Very hard Zone 5	Grunt and grasp	Sprinting	Efforts lasting less than 2min	89%-MHR

put less strain through your legs and you'll expend less energy. In some situations, a slower cadence has its advantages. If you're on the wheel of a rider, then you may find it easier to conserve your energy to 'roll' a higher gear. But if you're out on your own, pedalling quicker, in a smaller gear will serve you far better.

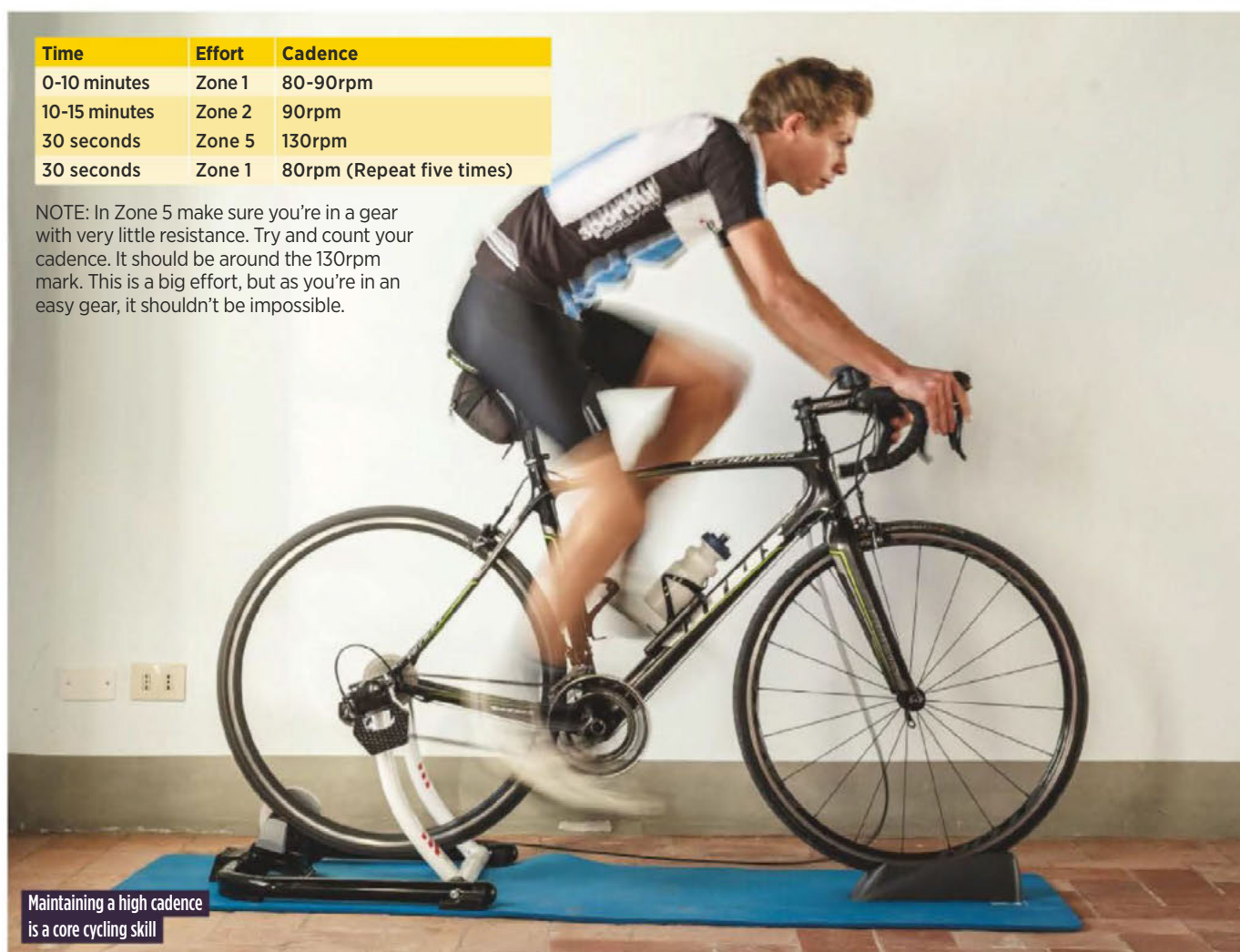
The session below is perfect for the turbo-trainer as you might not be used to pedalling at such high speed out on the road. And while it won't make you aerobically fitter, it will allow you to pedal at a faster rate, while conserving more energy.

End



Time	Effort	Cadence
0-10 minutes	Zone 1	80-90rpm
10-15 minutes	Zone 2	90rpm
30 seconds	Zone 5	130rpm
30 seconds	Zone 1	80rpm (Repeat five times)

NOTE: In Zone 5 make sure you're in a gear with very little resistance. Try and count your cadence. It should be around the 130rpm mark. This is a big effort, but as you're in an easy gear, it shouldn't be impossible.



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| July 5th - Birmingham to Oxford | Sept 13th - Manchester 100 |
| July 12th - Manchester to Blackpool | Sept 13th - New Forest |
| July 19th - London to Southend | Sept 20th - Brighton 100/50 |
| July 25th - Essex Castle | Sept 20th - The Leeds 100 Bike Ride |
| July 26th - London to Cambridge | Sept 27th - Bristol 100/60/25 |
| Aug 9th - Suffolk Coast | Sept 27th - Cambridge to Norwich |

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Back to your glutes

The gluteal muscles are some of the most important when cycling as they provide much of the power when pedalling. This month's exercises should help you look after them

Words: Robert Hicks

There are four gluteal muscles — gluteus maximus, gluteus medius, gluteus minimus and tensor fasciae latae — that are all too often neglected by cyclists. Considering they play such an important role in cycling, this is quite a surprising and worrying trend.

The gluteus maximus, the largest and most apparent gluteal muscle, is the primary hip extensor, and provides a significant amount of downward power during the pedal cycle. The two gluteus minimus and medius then act as rotational and lateral movers of the leg.

Did you know that better cyclists activate their gluteal muscles more during the pedalling phase, while less proficient cyclists rely more on their quadriceps?

Through cycling, however, both the glutes and quad muscles can become extremely tight and tender to the touch; while during harder, more intense training sessions or during competitions, these muscles can even become inflamed.

Unlike other muscles which are not as vital when cycling and so less important, it is paramount that the glutes are attended to as

they provide so much of the work and power to drive the bike forward.

Location

Massage and stretching is, of course, the answer, but in order to work on your gluteal muscles first you need to be able to find them.

The top edge of the gluteus maximus muscle slices across the top of the buttocks, and runs diagonally from the lower back (where it dimples) to the 'bump bone' on the side of the hip. You can feel this thick band of muscle through the skin.



Gluteus maximus (with ball)

Unfortunately, it can be quite tricky to massage your own bottom. So you will need help. Fortunately, it doesn't have to be another pair of hands — a ball can be effective.

■ Firstly, pick the right type of ball. This really is down to personal preference. For example, some prefer a tennis ball, as it is durable but also allows some give when you sit on it. Others like a harder ball, such as a cricket ball, to apply greater pressure over a larger area, while a few opt for a golf ball, which is much smaller and can be used to apply a more concentrated pressure on a specific spot.

■ While wearing cycling shorts, sit on the ball, positioning it under the area of the gluteus maximus that you think is the tightest. Control your body weight with your arms to avoid applying too much pressure, and move your hips in a circular motion over the ball to massage the area.

■ Work on each area until you feel the tightness starting to ease.

Gluteus medius (with foam roller)

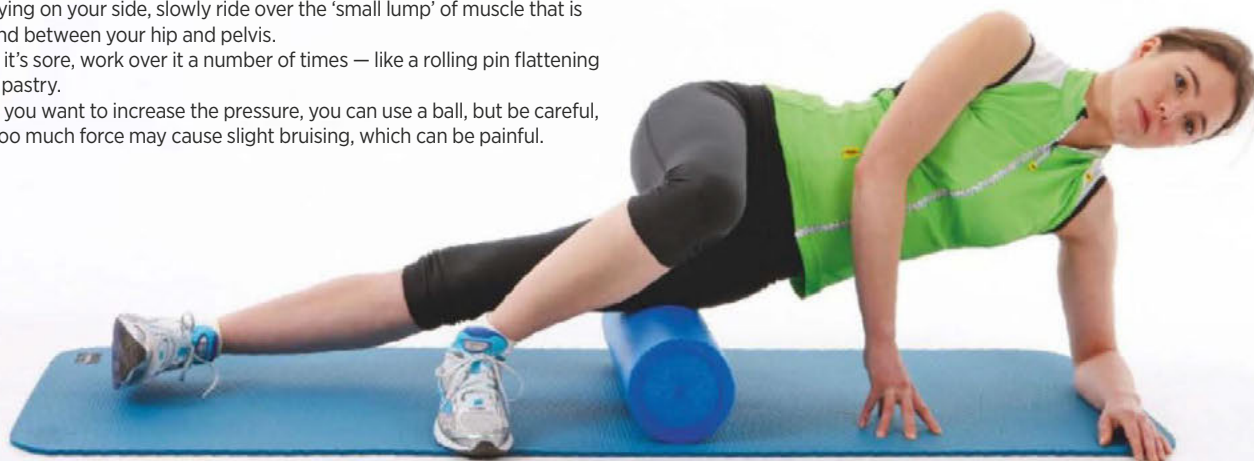
The gluteus medius muscle is located on the side of the hip, and can be accessed a lot more easily. For best results, use a foam roller rather than a ball, as this muscle is far more sensitive to pressure.

■ Start on the ground, with a medium size foam roller under your hip.

■ Lying on your side, slowly ride over the 'small lump' of muscle that is found between your hip and pelvis.

■ If it's sore, work over it a number of times — like a rolling pin flattening out pastry.

■ If you want to increase the pressure, you can use a ball, but be careful, as too much force may cause slight bruising, which can be painful.



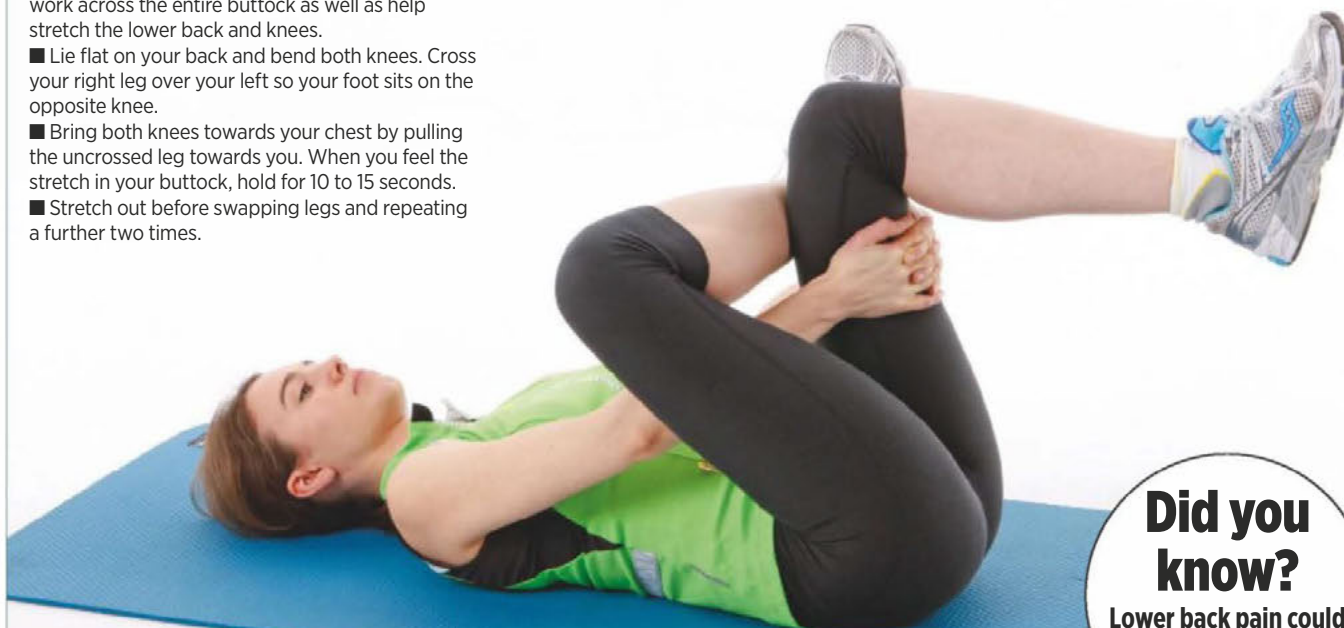
The pretzel stretch

Although not technically a massage, this stretch will certainly help alleviate tightness that may have accrued during your ride. The pretzel stretch will work across the entire buttock as well as help stretch the lower back and knees.

■ Lie flat on your back and bend both knees. Cross your right leg over your left so your foot sits on the opposite knee.

■ Bring both knees towards your chest by pulling the uncrossed leg towards you. When you feel the stretch in your buttock, hold for 10 to 15 seconds.

■ Stretch out before swapping legs and repeating a further two times.



Did you know?

Lower back pain could be the result of tight glutes

Twisting buttock stretch

This is another great stretch that will work the glutes, as well as improve strength in your abdominals and flexibility in your hips.

■ Sitting down, place one leg out straight and bring the other up, crossing it over your straight leg so your foot is flat on the floor, next to your other knee.

■ Turn by twisting your body slowly towards the bent knee. For a deeper stretch, anchor your elbow round the bent knee, pulling the knee further towards your body.

■ You should feel your buttock start to stretch, as well as your hips starting to rotate, and abdominals contracting. You may also feel the lower part of your back stretching, too.

■ Hold for 10 seconds before changing legs.





My first time trial

In an effort to prove that you don't have to be like Bradley Wiggins to ride a time trial, *Richard Yarrow* grabbed his regular road bike and signed up to compete in his first one

Words Richard Yarrow Photos Daniel Gould

The words of advice were ringing in my ears: if I enjoyed my first time trial, I hadn't ridden hard enough. I was desperately trying not to have a good time, but with my chin on the handlebars doing 35mph downhill, I was catching flies in my grin. The last five miles were hard, and as the chequered flag came into sight I forced a final effort. Photographer Daniel was visible behind the timekeeper to record my moment of glory.

My heart was pounding. I could barely breathe and was swept by a sudden desire to vomit over my Garmin. I grabbed the brakes, fell to the grass verge and lay there on my back, gasping. I remember a lady in a

silver car slowing to stare. She probably thought I'd been knocked off. Before I could get to my feet Daniel appeared beside me to record my moment of ignominy.

I didn't throw up, but I definitely had not enjoyed myself. I slowly pedalled back to the event HQ. The Garmin revealed my time and average speed, but all I wanted to know was whether I'd achieved my main goal — not to finish last.

Open to everyone

It wasn't my idea to do a time trial. When I finished my winter training feature (*Cycling Active*, June 2015), I asked editor Luke about another challenge. "Find a local TT event and

show how anyone with just a road bike can do it for fun and fitness," he said.

The governing body's website, www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk, revealed Stowmarket Cycle Club in Suffolk was staging an 'open' 20-miler in four weeks' time. I paid £9.50 and was in.

My idea was to get some expert training tips (see panel on page 99), but also to ride the route a couple of times ahead of race day. Once would be a sighting lap, twice would be to post a benchmark, and third... well, my hope was the adrenaline would kick in and having a number pinned to my back would make the difference.

Judging by Strava, other people were doing similar prep. My concern was just how fast they were going.



John Parkes

Event organiser, Stowmarket Cycle Club (www.stowcc.com)



"What you have shown is that anyone can ride a TT and that it's great fun. This year Stowmarket Cycle Club is running a special league for people who ride our events on road bikes, to try to encourage more people to take part. TTs are you against the clock, it's mind over matter. Anyone can do it. I'm 69 years old and I did a PB over a 10-mile course last year."

Times for the segment labelled 'Stowmarket 20' had been posted by 29 people and every one of them had an average speed quicker than mine. Somebody was doing 27mph — obviously TT bike territory, yet I would be riding my standard road machine, an off-the-shelf Felt Z5, full carbon but still wearing winter tyres. No tri-bars, no aero helmet, no fancy wheels, just my regular sportive bike.

The other thing is, at 6ft 4in tall and 90kg, I am not exactly designed for TTs. I have all the aerodynamic grace of Canary Wharf on wheels, and never averaged more than 20mph for an hour. The size of the challenge started to dawn on me.

Armed with a new Garmin heart



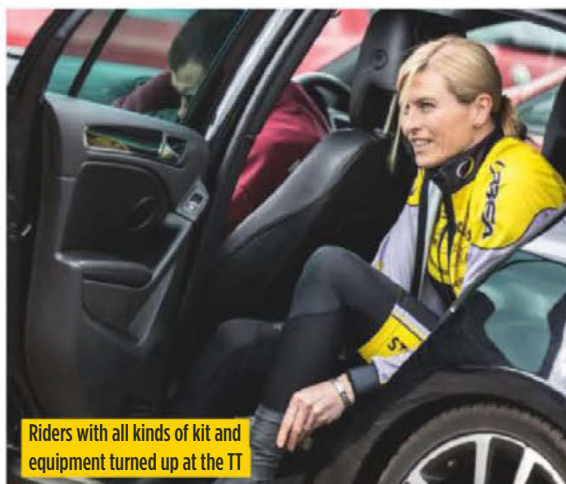
Entrants set off at one-minute intervals



Extra adrenaline kicks in with a number pinned on your back



Pre-event roller warm-up



Riders with all kinds of kit and equipment turned up at the TT





Taking the chequered flag at speed



TIME TRIAL WINNER

Skinsuit

TT helmet

Solid rear wheel (£700)

Tri-bars

Deep-section front wheel (£500)

Trek Speed Concept (£3,400)

Garmin Vector power meter pedals (£1,200)

Overshoes

All the gear (and plenty of idea!)

James Trenchard from Bungay, Norfolk, took the £25 first prize at the Stowmarket CC 20. He completed the 20 miles in 45:06, with an average speed of almost 27mph. A former English schools TT champion and now aged 39, he came back to the sport four years ago.

"It's a form of competitive cycling I can fit around the family," he says. "You know your start time, you can turn up 45 minutes before, pick up your number, do a warm-up and go home as soon as you're finished if you don't want to hang around for all the results. You can see the direct results of training and equipment changes, and set your own goals in terms of PBs or who you want to beat."



At last it's over!



rate (HR) monitor paired to my Edge 810, I went to scope the route. It was undulating with a couple of short but challenging climbs to keep things interesting. Using mostly quiet roads to loop around the village of Debenham, it was essentially a rectangle with four left turns.

I put in a moderate effort, completed it in 1hr 5min 19sec, at an average of 18.3mph and HR of 158bpm. My concern was the wind; the course was pretty exposed and the only saving grace was it would be the same for everyone.

For the next three weeks I kept my training rides to sprint intervals, hill repeats and 'fast hours', using the HR monitor as a training tool. Based on the Functional Threshold Power (FTP) test I'd done in winter training, my ideal HR to put me in zone five on the widely used seven-zone system was 155-165bpm. At 80-90 per cent of my



In a TT there's nothing but the open road and the clock to beat

maximum, it's high-intensity exercise and barely controlled breathing, helping develop the aerobic capacity needed for TTs.

Race day was approaching, so I tackled the TT course again. I rode hard and was faster in each of the eight private Strava segments I'd set up to monitor my progress. My time was now down to 1hr 2min 12sec, my average speed was up to 19.3mph and HR at 169bpm.

Keeping an eye on what I presumed were other competitors' Strava times, and knowing what I had left in the tank — not a lot — my plan was to avoid finishing last. If I could set a new PB, which basically meant averaging more than 20mph, I'd be delighted.

No backing out now

The scheduled start was 2pm, with 56 entrants setting off at one-minute intervals. I would be 19th away and had every expectation of being overtaken pretty quickly.

It was 8°C and overcast, but at least the gales of the previous week had dropped and the north wind was into single digits. I arrived at 1pm to find serious hardware already on show. I collected my number and pinned it to the back of my jersey.

Everyone was very friendly and while there was a wide age range taking part, it was overwhelmingly men in their 30s and 40s. Several were warming up on turbo-trainers and I



noticed a young chap with a prosthetic lower leg. His bike suggested I would be no competition.

With 30 minutes to my start, I checked my tyre pressures and started to think 'marginal gains'. I ditched the mini-saddlebag and pump, then drained my water bottle of caffeine-laced hydration drink to half level. Grabbing my helmet and flashing red rear light — the only two mandatory items — I slurped an energy gel and hit the road to warm up.

I arrived at the start with two people in front of me ready to go. When it was my turn to set off I shuffled forward to the line and clipped in as a marshal held me steady. "Three... two... one... go!"

The course went gently downhill for the first mile and I was trying to keep a sensible pace and stay low over the bars. At the bottom, a sharp left led into a steady climb. I was happy that I didn't get overtaken until close on six minutes in.

The long, back section of the rectangle was into the wind, but everything was going OK so far. My HR was around 175bpm and I was pleased with my speed. The second and third riders to pass me did so in quick succession, at about half distance, but helped spur me on by giving me something to chase.

At 15 miles came the final turn. With my average speed steady at 19.7mph, and a slight tailwind home, I

knew a PB was possible. Ahead I saw a flashing red light and realised I was catching someone. Again, it was a timely boost. I reeled him in but was swiftly overtaken by someone else. It gave me another back wheel to chase and I was still focused on that when the finish line came into view. Seconds later, I was on the verge.

As I pedalled back to HQ, I reckoned I'd done enough. The Garmin said I was more than two minutes faster than my previous best, and my average speed was over 20mph. As riders and supporters gathered for refreshments, the official results came up on a projected computer screen. My numbers were 59min 11sec — almost exactly three minutes quicker than before — at an average of 20.28mph. I was 48th out of 56, way off the pace but thrilled with my performance. I collected my 'trophy' from event organiser John Parkes — a free and very tasty cupcake with the Stowmarket Cycle Club shield on top.

Later, Strava analysis revealed I'd gone faster in five out of my eight segments. My average HR was 177bpm, and on the run home it was over 180bpm, pretty close to my FTP maximum. It had been a good afternoon's work, and I definitely had not enjoyed myself.

Find time trials near you at
www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk
 or through your local cycle club.

How to train for your first time trial

Richard asked Andy Kirkland, a British Cycling Level 3 coach, for expert advice



I've only got four weeks before my first time trial. Is that enough?

With your endurance base from doing regular rides and sportives, it's certainly enough to get to the start line relatively well-prepared. That said, planning six weeks ahead would allow you to include more progression in your training. A 6-12 week timeframe is generally how long it takes for many physiological adaptations to 'show up' in the body.

I can commit to an hour of road riding five days a week. What sort of training should I be doing?

Do three steady rides of moderate effort and two high-intensity rides that include intervals. These don't all need to be out on the road, especially since intervals are more effective on a turbo-trainer where you don't need to worry about traffic. A session with four five-minute hard efforts slightly above your one-hour pace, and three minutes recovery between, will help you be prepared.

Is there any benefit to doing longer rides at a steady pace?

These should form part of the training programme for most riders as they help develop a more efficient 'engine'. However, with four weeks, I don't think they will be of much benefit.

How long should I have as a recovery time before the event?

Training for five hours a week shouldn't leave you overly fatigued and I don't see much need to reduce volume or intensity in the final week. I'd suggest a steady ride that includes a couple of short 1-2 minute efforts two days before your event then a rest day. Fresh legs are the key.

Is there anything else I could be doing?

As long as you've got a healthy balanced diet and are in good shape generally, I'd keep things normal. Making drastic changes will probably do more harm than good. Swimming or running is fine as long as it's something you do regularly and it doesn't leave you unduly fatigued for your race. I recommend weight-bearing exercises to all cyclists as part of their long-term training plan to help keep their bones strong.

Any advice for event day?

Get the simple things right. Have your normal breakfast but consider eating a small pre-race snack with around 30 minutes to go. Pacing is probably the biggest limiting factor in the performance of novice time trial riders. Start off very steady and keep your breathing very relaxed for 2-3 minutes. Only push it once you're settled into a rhythm. If you enjoy the race, you've taken it too easy!



British Cycling has a 'Find a Coach' directory at:
www.britishcycling.org.uk/coachingdirectory.
The Insight Zone offers training advice from leading cycling experts around the world at:
www.britishcycling.org.uk/knowledge.



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This month Jocelyn finds out that nothing can prepare you for an unexpected illness

Planning. That's what we need if we are to have the best chance of achieving our goals. You, as I do, probably plan your week's training. Maybe you've broken it down into miles per week. I've gone for hours, aiming for seven — a mix of high-intensity Wattbike sessions and road riding, generally on a sportive booked and paid for so I can't back out!

We plan our nutrition. To ensure we have the right mix of carbs and protein to fuel the ride and recover well, and make sure we have enough packed to get us from the start to the finish line. We even plan our kit for the day.

But one thing we can't plan for is illness. It comes along and takes a big debilitating swipe at you and can knock you back days, if not weeks.

I was feeling really strong on my return from Majorca and confidently went into sportives I had scheduled: the 65-mile Etape Loch Ness and the 55-mile Dartmoor Demon (with a few 20 per cent climbs!) really helped to cement how good I was feeling. That was until I got chickenpox.

Thankfully I was relatively lucky as it can be a nasty virus to contract as an adult, but it put me out for three weeks. And now I'm genuinely concerned that these weeks off have scuppered my plan. For the first time I've thought that I won't be at a good enough level of

Jocelyn Mack

AGE: 34

WEIGHT: 10st

JOB: Professional dancer and part-time writer for Time Inc's cycling titles

YEARS CYCLING: Two

BIKE: Specialized Ruby Ruby Disc

LIVES: South-East London

GOAL: To get fit enough to ride the 142km Etape du Tour this July

CA EXPERT



Dan Henchy: owner and head cycle coach at www.PBscience.com

fitness to take on the Etape du Tour.

I spoke with expert coach Dan Henchy about the best way to proceed.

"You clearly rested while you were ill, which is the best course of action. I don't want to scare anyone but a virus can make its way to the heart," he said. "Myocarditis isn't common at all but it can have a nasty ending so it's really important to rest your body when you're ill.

"You must finish any medication. I've had athletes who have come back to training, felt great and not completed their course of antibiotics. It's pushed their recovery back again.

"Don't train on painkillers either — for obvious reasons!"

Slow progress

I had to wait my illness out without medication, and when I got back on the bike I noticed I couldn't maintain my previous levels and zones of fitness. As Henchy said: "Just a few days off and you can come back stronger but, generally, anything over a week and you'll lose fitness. It can take a month to build back up to that pre-illness fitness.

"Ideally you need to build up slowly and favour high frequency over high intensity in these first few weeks back. So if you're doing four sessions a week, get out and do that but maybe instead of doing an hour per session, aim for

30-40 minutes. Monitor your fitness after each session, too. Any signs of fatigue or a relapse, any signs of illness, then back off.

"Blood volume can drop too, so if you use a heart-rate monitor then take the values with a pinch of salt and don't attach too much credence to them in the first few sessions. The drop in blood volume will push your heart rate up as your heart needs to work harder."

I also noticed fatigue the days after my sessions. "You're more at risk of running out of energy as carb stores are reduced [nutrient supply is being used up to help fight infection]," Henchy said. "So you need to pay particular attention to your diet. Load up your muscles with glycogen through carbohydrate.

"There's always the other side though. People might notice they put on a few pounds and may want to reduce intake in order to lose them and get back to pre-illness weight.

"If you have a bad cold, fever or diarrhoea watch your fluid levels. You'll be losing a lot so it's important to replace them and get topped up again before you begin training."

My training may not have gone to plan but it is just a small hurdle on the way to something bigger. With Dan's advice I can continue with my plan and hopefully get back on track for July.

Living life to the full

CA speaks to Tim Smale and his son, Joe, who was diagnosed with leukaemia at two years old. The pair are currently preparing to ride from London to Paris

Words Rebecca Charlton **Photos** Mike Prior, Adrian Brooks / Imagewis

It's always special to be able to share a love of cycling with your son but even more so for performance coach Tim Smale, 55, whose son Joe, now 17, was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia in 2000, when he was just two years old.

"It was devastating and totally out of the blue. Our lives changed dramatically overnight," Tim says of his son's diagnosis 15 years ago.

Joe was admitted to Great Ormond Street Hospital where he was treated and started to make a good recovery. However, seven years later he relapsed, when he was nine. "It's the worst nightmare imaginable," explains Tim. "Utter disbelief, having been in remission for seven years."

Again Joe underwent extensive treatment, but in 2010 Tim noticed the signs that his son wasn't well again. The leukaemia had returned for a third time.

"When Joe was 13 we knew something wasn't right but didn't dare to talk about it at first. We got the blood tests back and he was admitted to hospital on New Year's Eve," says Tim.

"Joe has relapsed twice in the last 15 years so you cannot ever relax about it not happening again, however irrational that might be, but he is still with us. We met plenty of other families in our hospital stays who were not so fortunate, so it does teach you about perspective."

The third time Joe was told the leukaemia had come back he underwent a stem cell transplant. He was off school for almost a year while he recovered. "The transplant was relatively straightforward," explains Tim. "It was the horrible preparation of seeing your child receiving intensive radiation and chemo for such a long time to get him into remission so he was able to have the transplant — that was the worst thing."

"Joe had six months of painfully slow recovery, building up muscle and stamina and appetite whilst being in danger of infection the whole time. It's fair to say that it was really hard for us,

but it was even harder for Joe. No friends could visit, he couldn't go out and we had to go back into hospital plenty of times.

"That's when Joe decided to attempt the Bikeathon from his hospital bedroom on a bike machine."

Cycling obsession

Today, Joe is in remission and studying for his AS Level exams. But over the years throughout his treatment, cycling has been something both he and his father have been passionate about. And now the pair are preparing to ride 500km from London to Paris in September to raise money for Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research.

"When Joe first went into Great Ormond Street Hospital one of the few leaflets we were given explaining his treatment was one from a charity called Leukaemia Research Fund [now Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research]," explains Tim. "It had a picture of Gary Lineker riding a bike in an event called the London Bikeathon to raise money for blood cancer research."

"We decided to sign up for it to also help raise money. I think we've now done the Bikeathon every year for the last 15 years, apart from one, and Joe has become obsessed with cycling."

Just a year after his transplant Joe completed a 52-mile Bikeathon, and his father says he's been getting "more and more adventurous" ever since. "He has the physique of a rider, unlike me," says Tim. "He started following the Tour de France much more and went out more on his bike around Richmond Park. One year we got to watch the final leg in Paris."

So how is the pair finding training for the approaching London to Paris ride? "I'm waiting until after my exams to start training fully," Joe says, "but I have had a few rides and have been training on my turbo-trainer in between revision."

As for how the two fare on their rides together, Joe says of his father: "He's a bit slow going uphill at Richmond Park but we meet up at the end!"



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Tim laughs, adding, "I can't keep up with him any more! Our ride to Paris will be tough and fun but I suspect he'll be up the Champs-Elysées before any of us."

Looking to the future

As well as Joe and his father, 'Team Joe' is made up of nine people; two uncles, a cousin, second cousin, friends and Joe's granddad, who will all be at the finish line in Paris. While the aim is to raise as much money as possible, Tim explains the pair is also dedicating their ride to Angus Rowland, "Joe's friend in hospital who sadly passed away four years ago

from a similar illness. I'm sure it will be a fun ride but our purpose is to help beat blood cancer forever by raising funds and awareness."

Riding in memory of Angus, Team Joe has big fundraising targets, as Joe explains: "After being in hospital so long it feels really good to be out on the road. It's not really about me anymore; it's about everyone else. I'm sure Angus would've felt the same. Now, I don't look back, I stay focused on the future."

Tim stresses the importance of what they're doing with the charity: "Last year LLR raised nearly £5 million

For more information on Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research and to donate to Team Joe, visit: www.beatingbloodcancers.org.uk/Team-Joe-Paris, and www.beatingbloodcancers.org.uk

from sports events. This is invested into finding cures for blood cancers, but the job is not yet done.

"Whilst survival rates for the most common form of childhood cancer, acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, are now 90 per cent that's not much consolation if you're one of the 10 per cent. We have now identified the biggest areas where research funds can be used to ensure that every patient has the best possible chance of survival. But we need more money."

Remaining positive and looking forward has been easier for the whole family, knowing they're raising such



important funds for Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research. “We raised about £30,000 first time round before the internet made charity giving so much easier,” says Tim. “Raising money feels like we’re doing our bit, giving something back, plus helping those who have been less fortunate.”

“The Bikeathon has been a calendar event every year, apart from when Joe was very poorly and we couldn’t do it. It’s also been a focus for friends and family to get out and cycle together — they’re really fun family events. Plus just being able to do it with Joe is very special and humbling.”

As for predictions for the London to Paris ride, Tim says, “Surviving the ride and arriving in Paris would be good! The furthest I’ve ever done in a day is about 60 kilometres on a cycle holiday around Holland about 35 years ago, which I still consider one of my best holidays ever, even though it was quite pedestrian and on those traditional Dutch sit-up bikes.

“Our main goal will be to raise about £20,000 for Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research.

“Joe shares the LLR motto of: ‘Life is a gift, use it wisely and live it fiercely,’” Tim adds.



“The Bikeathon has been a calendar event every year, apart from when Joe was very poorly and we couldn’t do it. It’s also been a focus for friends and family to get out and cycle together. Plus just being able to do it with Joe is very special and humbling.”



Get involved

This year’s London to Paris takes place on September 17-21, 2015. Along with the gang from *Cycling Active* and hundreds of other riders, Team Joe will be taking on 500km in four days en route to the Champs-Élysées. This year’s event is now sold out; however, if you would like to be added to the waiting list you can email londonparis@beatingbloodcancers.org.uk.

The good news is you can still get involved with one of Beating Blood Cancers’ other annual cycling events, including the London Bikeathon. Now in its 19th year the ride offers a 26 or 52-mile route that starts and finishes in Central London and takes in some of the city’s most iconic landmarks. There’s also plenty of food, music and activities throughout the day meaning there’s something for everyone. www.bikeathons.org.uk

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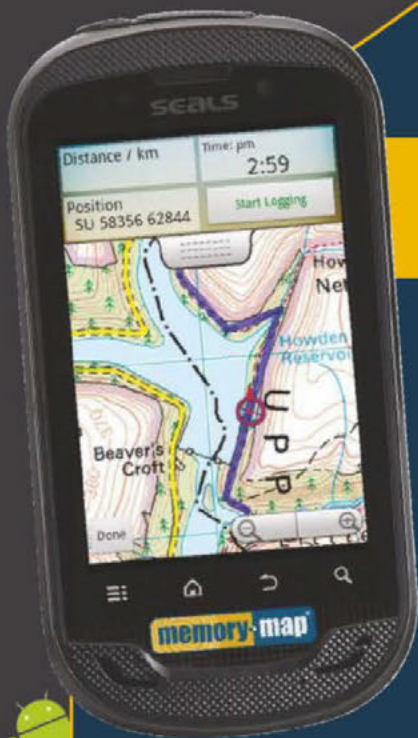
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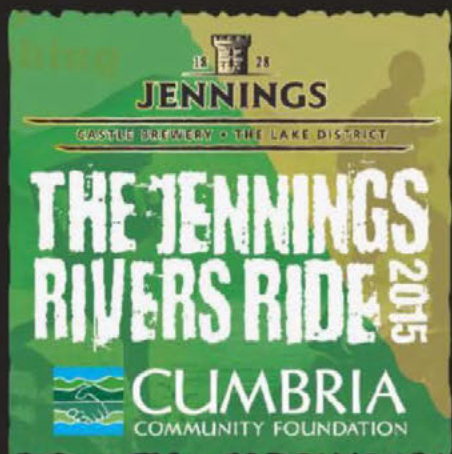
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Climbing challenge

This is the one thing that nearly every cyclist wants to get better at, so here is a demanding session that will really improve your technique and fitness

Words Hannah Reynolds Photo Andy Jones



You can do this as often as you like on one ride. Start by doing this on just one hill and build up to tackling three or four climbs in this style in one hard, hilly session

■ Time taken: 60 minutes

This session works on two areas: improving your technique and improving your fitness. It is not an easy session but it can be thrown into any hilly ride up to three-hours long and doesn't have to be a specific session. It is a tough one though, so only aim to do it once a week.

Let's start with position. When climbing seated you want to be able to suck plenty of air into your lungs, so keep your back straight and chest open. Position your hands wide apart by holding onto the lever hoods and relax your elbows; they should have a clear bend in them. You may find it helps to slide forward in the saddle so you can put more force through the top of the pedal stroke.

When you switch to standing climbing, as you will in this session, you need to do it with thought, particularly if there is another rider following you. First click into the next hardest gear. Stand up only when your lead foot reaches the top of the pedal stroke — at two o'clock. As you stand keep your body above

the saddle and weight centred over the bottom bracket. If you pull yourself forward to stand, your bike will shoot backwards — this can often cause a problem for riders behind you. The action of standing and pedalling out of the saddle should feel a bit like climbing the stairs.

Now the hard part

Try this interval session when you are on a climb that takes five to 15 minutes. Start climbing in a seated position at a steady but hard pace — you should be breathing deeply but feel in control. After one minute at this effort, get out of the saddle and pedal hard for 20 pedal strokes, paying attention to your technique. It's not an all-out sprint and you shouldn't become ragged in your breathing or form but it should feel hard. After 20 pedal strokes sit back down and continue climbing at a similar pace to your first effort. Do this once every two minutes until you reach the top of the climb.

This will help in two ways. It will help you to develop a really smooth transition between seated and standing climbing and it will be working just below and slightly above your

lactate threshold helping teach your body how to process the accumulation of lactate and allow you to maintain the hard/steady pace between your out-of-the-saddle efforts without the need for recovery.

TRAINING SESSION

Time	Zone
0-20	1-2
20-22	3
22-22.20	4
22.20-24	3
24-24.20	4
24.20-26	3
26-36	2
36-38	3
38-38.20	4
38.20-40	3
40-40.20	4
40.20-42	3
42-60	2

Statuesquely Scottish

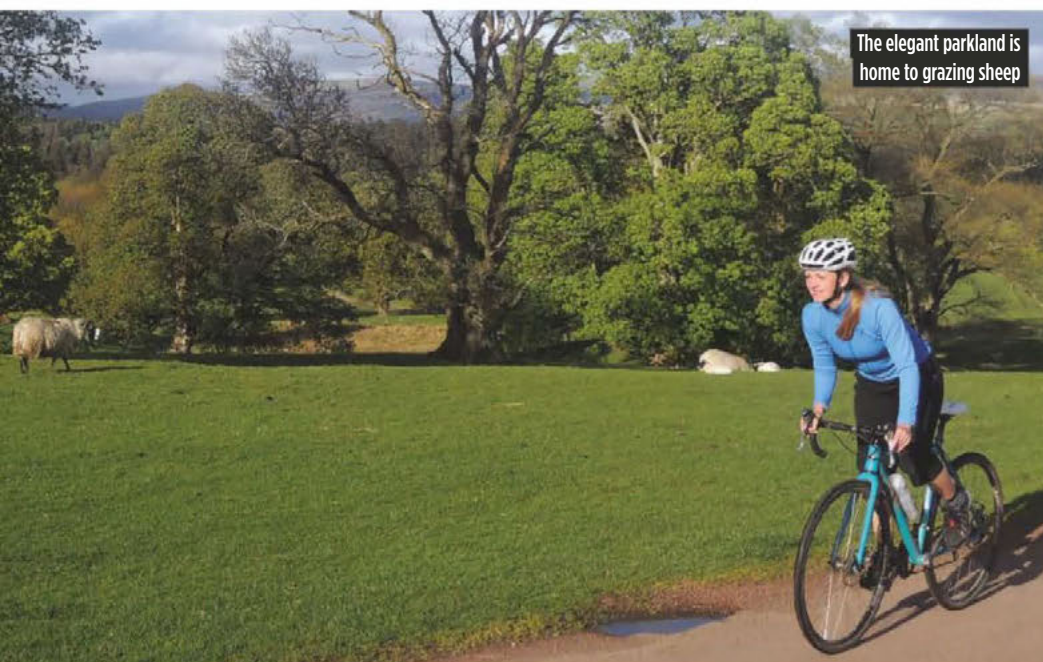


***Hannah Reynolds* helps herself to a generous slice of the high life in south-west Scotland, setting out beneath the lofty gaze of a Duke and Duchess**

Words Hannah Reynolds **Photos** John Walsh



One of many trails cut through woodland at Drumlanrig Castle



The elegant parkland is home to grazing sheep

HEADS UP

A scenic ride via a stately home and parkland, before a chance to see deer and kites along quiet roads



Distance:
65km/40miles

Big hills: 3

Challenge: ★★☆☆☆

Cafe stops: 2

It doesn't get much grander for a depart than here, outside the gates of Drumlanrig Castle.

The 'pink palace', as it is affectionately known, is hewn from red sandstone and holds a slightly-elevated position above the sweep of parkland. One of Scotland's finest examples of 17th-century architecture, it afforded its residents a stunning view across the Nith Valley. Home to the Douglas family for generations, it is now open to the public and home to the Buccleuch art collection.

Within the castle grounds are many miles of mountain bike trails, ranging in type from the family-friendly to downright challenging. Four easy rides — green routes — take you around the castle grounds, on a tour of the three lochs or on a gentle amble along the riverbanks. A blue run is still relatively easy but takes you deeper into the off-road trails, and for the more serious mountain bikers, there is a 15km red route and 8km black



STOP!



PUBS

Buccleuch and Queensberry

112 Drumlanrig St,
Thornhill
Tel: 01848 323101
Email: info@bqahotel.com
www.bqahotel.com

Craigdarroch Arms

High Street, Moniaive,
Thornhill DG3 4HN
01848 200205
www.craigdarrocharmshotel.co.uk

CAFES

The Castle Tea Room

Stable Yard Cafe, Drumlanrig Castle,
Thornhill, Dumfries & Galloway,
DG3 4AQ

PLACES TO VISIT

Drumlanrig Castle

BIKE SHOPS

Rik's Bike Shed

To enjoy a day's cycling around Drumlanrig, the castle and its grounds, you don't even need to bring your own bike, as you can hire one from Rik's Bike Shed. Run by Rik himself, it's found at the base of the trails. There is a whole range of bikes to get everyone in the family riding, from balance bikes for the very smallest through to tagalongs and high-end mountain bikes for those wanting to tackle the black runs.

As well as bike hire, there is a very well-equipped, small shop, bike wash, bike parking and a mechanic on hand to help with any problems. Rik also offers a guiding service, so if you want to improve your bike-handling or try your hand at some of the trickier off-road sections with some assistance from a great coach, book a session before your visit.

The Stable Yard, Drumlanrig Castle,
Thornhill, Dumfries and Galloway,
DG3 4AQ
01848 330080



The 'pink palace' shines amid rolling parkland



route: plenty to keep everyone busy for a day.

Within the grounds you will also find Rik's Bike Shed, a shop and hire centre with a wealth of information about the area. Rik himself has been guiding and coaching here for nearly two decades and is often on hand to provide advice. For those wanting to improve their mountain bike skills, he offers guided rides, bookable in advance. As well as the bike shop, there are two cafes, one for a pre-ride coffee and one for the post-ride coffee. With so many options within the grounds of Drumlanrig, you can easily fill a day riding the trails and soaking up the atmosphere, but after a short play in the bluebells, we decided to hit the open roads beyond the landscaped parkland to find some wilder hillsides.

Call of the hills

Meandering through the park past a couple of small lochs, we emerge out of the shade of the trees onto the A702 just east of Thornhill. From here, we followed the A702 toward Moniaive where the plan was to do a loop that would return us to Moniaive and the Craigdarroch Arms before the short ride back to Thornhill and our accommodation.

The road is one of the few A roads in the area, but is still remarkably



Ordnance Survey mapping © Crown copyright. AM46/13. Created with Memory-Map

ROAD BOOK

Start inside the grounds of Drumlanrig Castle. Head left, the castle behind you, towards Druid's Loch. Turn left, crossing over Marr Burn following

the road till you cross the neck of Starn Loch, then turn right.

After 4km, take sharp right, shortly followed by sharp left. Follow the road to a T-junction, turn right onto the A702 in the direction of Moniaive.

Pass through the village of Penpont. At a fork, head right in the direction of Tynron, away

The Buccleuch and Queensberry Arms, Thornhill

Thornhill is a small town just three miles from Drumlanrig Castle, making the Buccleuch and Queensberry Arms Hotel the perfect base for exploring the castle and surrounding area. It's a luxurious, small boutique hotel with each room decorated with individual character, the rich tartans giving a Scottish feel but with a lighter, modern twist. Despite the beautiful decor, our muddy mountain bike shoes and filthy bikes were welcomed and taken care of.

After a day of riding, it is a beautiful place to relax and enjoy a drink by the fireside. If your legs are a bit sore after a day in the saddle, be sure to book into the Boughton room, in which an over-sized bath is perfect for soaking weary limbs.

The bar, as you would expect, has a fine collection of whiskies and also a carefully-curated wine list. Local foods feature strongly on the menu, particularly game, fish and Scotch beef. With hunting and fishing such popular pastimes in the area, the kitchen also offers to cook your catch for you.

Breakfast is as grand a feast as dinner, offering everything from hearty bowls of porridge finished with heather honey to eggs Benedict or a full Scots breakfast complete with a good-sized tattie scone. It will take a far few miles of pedalling to burn off that lot. Thankfully, with so many quiet roads and off-road trails to choose from, that shouldn't present a problem!

from A702. Arrive in Moniaive, cross the bridge, then turn left on the A702 heading to Castlefairn. Remain on A702 through Bogue. Before entering St John's Town of Dalry, turn right on B700 direction Carsphairn. Remain on B700 through Dalry. At a T-junction, turn right on the B729. Remain on the B729 until reaching Moniaive again.

Eat, Sleep, Ride, Repeat.

It's good to get away and see somewhere new. And when you've finished a long ride, exploring new places, it's good to have a little bit of comfort; a cold drink, a hot drink, a microwave, gas hobs, running water, a sofa, double beds with mattresses. The things we take for granted in our own homes. The 6-berth OPUS Camper Trailer can offer you all of those comforts, plus a whole lot more, including the ability to carry up to 6 cycles on it's roof. OPUS takes care of the simple things, leaving you more time to concentrate on your routes.

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opuscamper.com

Celebrating a year in the saddle

Following in the wheeltracks of a legend: why a record that has stood since 1938 is inspiring a new generation of female cyclists

Words Cath Harris
Photos Roo Fowler & CW Archive

Those achieving excellence in physical endeavour often become role models. An increasing number are women — think heptathlete Jessica Ennis-Hill, boxer Nicola Adams and our own Victoria Pendleton. Now a new standard-setter is emerging from an ambitious project to encourage more women of all levels to ride their bikes. Billie Fleming was neither an Olympic champion nor a Tour de France winner but instead, impressively, cycled every day for a year. In tribute to Fleming's 29,603.7-mile record, set in 1938 and still standing, Hertfordshire nurse Anne Hunt is staging a rerun of Fleming's daunting achievement throughout 2015. In doing so, she is encouraging scores of newcomers and returnees to ride side by side with regular cyclists.

Hunt's plan is not to ride every mile herself but to inspire women all over Britain to complete sections of Fleming's route so that the cumulative distance comes somewhere close to her record.

After the first 100 days, 482 tribute rides had taken place in 24 counties with at least one woman riding every day, sometimes through hail, snow and high winds.

"I am really proud of how it's going," Hunt says. "There are women who have been completely bitten by the Billie bug going the extra mile to fit rides in."

Fleming's goal was to promote health and fitness through cycling and to spur one million women on to ride a bike — targets echoed by Hunt. She feared the advance of the car and its fall-out for the nation's

wellbeing. So strongly did Fleming feel about the subject that she relinquished her job as a senior typist, setting out on her mammoth enterprise on January 1, 1938, with little more than a puncture outfit and a few bars of chocolate in her saddlebag. Her sponsored three-speed Rudge-Whitworth bike had no bottle cage.

"She wanted to prove that cycling was good for health and fitness and that it was economically and socially much better than driving," Hunt says.

Often, Fleming completed round trips from her home in Mill Hill village, which is now engulfed by London. By April, she was venturing into Somerset and Kent, and in May she reached Monmouth on the Welsh border. She arrived in Norfolk in June, York and Northumberland in July, and in August she visited Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Little is known of her destinations for the rest of the year.

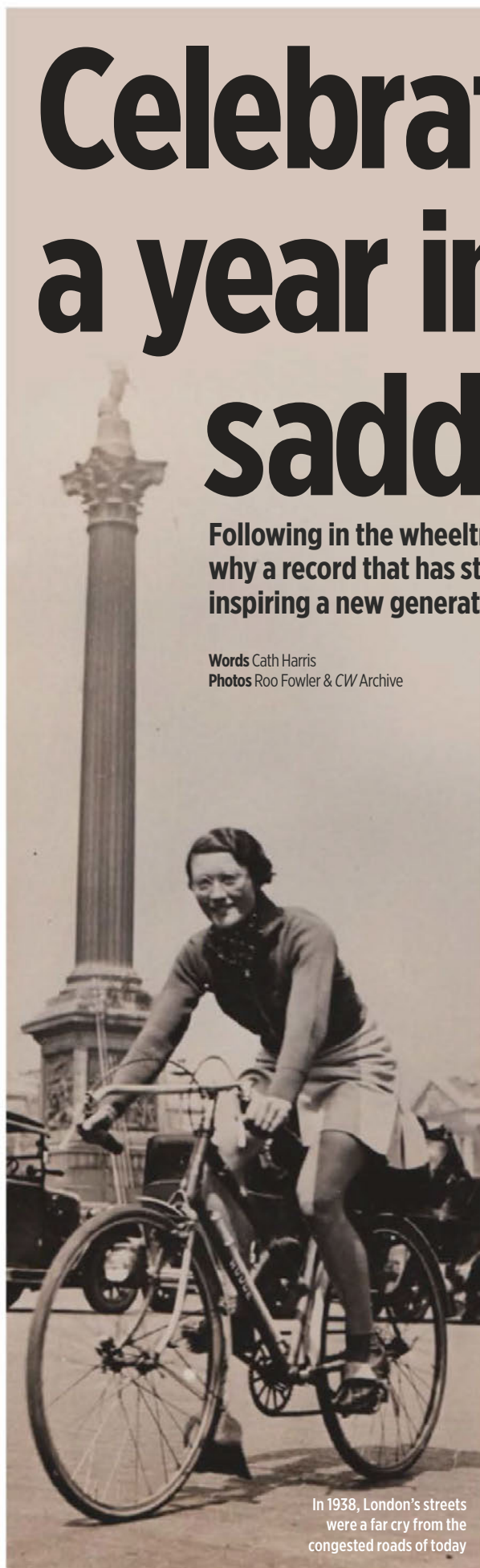
"Perhaps the recorders trusted her by then and felt that they only needed to note down distances," says Hunt.

Fleming defied all weathers, averaging 81 miles per day. She suffered just one puncture. During overnight stays she would give talks about her mission. Her progress was logged by *Cycling* magazine (now *Cycling Active's* sister publication, *Cycling Weekly*).

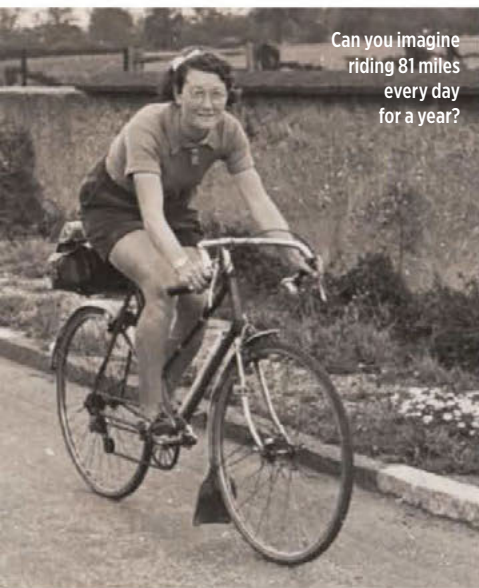
Just like Billie

This year's tribute rides, which also began on January 1, are being tracked just as assiduously by Hunt and her small back-up team. Friends Pam and Greg Hart have created a lively website that tallies ride statistics, as well as highlighting each day's outing and special events. With most of Fleming's early rides confined to south-eastern England, the trio have conjured 'Ride Like Billie' days, when social rides are staged all over the UK. The first, in chilly February, attracted 198 cyclists to a choice of 32 events.

Greg says: "It has meant that people from all over the country have been able to take part. Now, they are asking when Billie rode near them."



In 1938, London's streets were a far cry from the congested roads of today



Can you imagine riding 81 miles every day for a year?



Rides are fun and well organised



Many of the routes are traffic-free



Quiet parks make for relaxed riding



Fleming's birthday was celebrated in fine style!

Often there is more than one ride in a day, with a growing number being adopted by British Cycling's Breeze network. One, in Hertfordshire in April, was among several marking Fleming's birthday (she died in May 2014 aged 100). It was led by Breeze Champion Veronica Chamberlain.

"When Anne had the idea I thought it was fantastic," Chamberlain says. "Billie was an inspiration and a fantastic role model. The tribute rides are a great way of encouraging women to be more fit and healthy, and as a means of promoting cycling."

Chamberlain's ride along the Alban Way, a converted railway line between St Albans and Hatfield, attracted 16 riders, one of the highest tallies to date. Some were fairly new to cycling but others had cycled for many years. The event was the 15th Billie ride for experienced cyclist Sarah Smith, including several she had led.

"The tribute has caught people's imaginations, and for me has given a sense of direction to my rides, and people to ride with," Smith says. "To begin with, people thought they had to ride the whole distance but now realise they can just cycle to a place that Billie visited. That's encouraging more people to participate. Even if they only ride short distances, they still feel they have contributed by carrying the baton."

Much of the baton carrying has relied on social media and word of mouth, but a far wider audience will see the results. Think Again Productions, an independent filmmaker based in Brighton, is following Hunt's project with gusto.

"We started filming in November when we met Anne at the National Cycle Archives at the University of Warwick," says TAP co-founder Frit Tam. "She was researching Billie's route and wasn't too taken with adverts of the time — one offered a women's saddle 'perfect for the back of a tandem!'"

Tam and business partner Liam Walters are using three cameras to follow a Fleming ride every fortnight, including one mounted on one of the participants' handlebars.

"We felt we would be missing out if we didn't film it and weren't sure if we



SARAH SMITH

"It must have taken great determination to get out of bed when she was achy from the day before and then see rain lashing the window and knowing that she had to ride her bike. It shows just how committed she was to her vision."



GRACE EMINTON

"These rides mean I have company and go somewhere new. You can take your time and enjoy getting there rather than racing. I couldn't believe Billie cycled so far every day."



CLARE THOMPSON

"My step-daughter, Katie, came on the Alban Way ride and had been champing at the bit to take part. She saw that you didn't have to get hot and sweaty and that a ride could be quite manageable."

would come across anything like it again. We support the core message, to get more women cycling, and wanted to be part of something that helped promote that message."

The final product could be anything from a 30-minute to a feature-length film, or even a series of three films.

"There will definitely be an online release and maybe a DVD," Walters adds. "We're planning to show it at sports film festivals. How that goes will determine our wider distribution strategy. We don't want to restrict access. We want to help inspire people."

Clare Thompson is among those already inspired. She joined the Alban Way ride having helped launch the tribute event in January when cyclists circled Regents Park three times before following Fleming's route to Aylesbury.

In honour of Fleming's birthday, Thompson, a former flatmate of Hunt, baked a cake which she then carried to the very accommodating Simmons Bakers in Hatfield to be shared among the riders.

Inspirational

"The tribute is an awesome, awesome thing," says Thompson. "These rides are bringing fun into sport, and I like the fact that they're not sponsored because so many events are and you can't keep asking for money. I think it's great to just get out and ride to raise awareness of cycling and share the amazing achievements of this remarkable lady."

The contribution of Londoner Jacqui Cycles is verging on the remarkable. By mid-April she had completed 40 tribute rides, clocking up 2,400 miles. "The Billie rides have taken me to new destinations, places I would not have chosen on my own, and are making me a very competent map reader," Cycles says. "But Billie is hard to live up to. We have all wondered how she did it day after day — especially in those early winter months. Anne is amazing, she has so much energy. I think the project is a brilliant way to celebrate this epic record. I have already met so many people and made some great friends."

Hunt herself has cycled as often as she can, between nursing shifts and managing a young family. She has planned vibrant tribute events for stage finishes of the Women's Tour in Hemel Hempstead and the Tour of Britain in Blyth. From October, when Fleming's destinations are largely unknown, riders will be encouraged to cycle Fleming's mileage in their areas.

"Anne is a brick," says Greg Hart. "When someone has dropped out she has ridden instead, even when she's been quite ill."

Chamberlain adds: "Anne is incredible. She started this from nothing and has got someone out riding every day this year. You don't have to be super-fit or have a carbon bike. Anyone can do it."

www.tributetobillie.co.uk

End



Watery wonderland

Heading through suburban parkland, away from the hurly-burly of city life, *Maria David* enjoys a relaxing ride around the grounds of Virginia Water, on the outskirts of London

Words Maria David Photos Roo Fowler

A leisurely ride soaking in the rarefied air of the leafy surroundings of the Royal Landscape

Distance: 11 miles

Big hills: 1

Challenge: ★★☆☆☆

Cafe stops: 3



**11
miles**

Dear reader,
Oh, I do love to get out of London for the day and breathe in the agreeable fresh air of Surrey and Berkshire. My favourite place is that corner just south of the bustle and chaos of Staines and Slough, between the grandiose but elegant Royal Holloway College and the sumptuous grounds of the Sunningdale Estate. What a beautiful expanse of water it is, bordered by lovely woodland and near to the famous ruins of a Roman temple.

The lake's surface shimmers in the early morning sun oh so atmospherically; this is a haven for peaceful reflection and relaxation, and it's a place where I love to ride my bicycle. Welcome to Virginia Water.

On the waterfront

With its quiet lanes winding through the best parkland and woodland of south-west London, rocks hugging the lake shores, this would make a perfect film setting. A stone bridge along a woodland trail is particularly magical — I could just imagine Harry Potter conducting his wizardry here.

Today is a delightful morning, with dog-walkers, joggers, people taking a stroll, all enjoying the serenity and pleasantness of the grounds. I love just riding along here at a leisurely pace without a care in the world.



Perusing ruins nabbed from Leptis Magna, a Roman city in Libya

After crossing the lovely stone bridge, I apply a little more pressure on the pedals as I propel myself towards the Totem Pole at Savill Gardens. The pole's kaleidoscope of motifs startles the eye with its vibrant colours, set among the green shrubbery of the gardens — we have the Canadians to thank for this, if not for Celine Dion and Justine Bieber!

Not-so-plain vanilla

A little farther on, I arrive at a crossroads that doubles as a gathering place for ice cream vans, which at this time of the day converge here before trooping out to their staging post for the day. I'm spoilt for choice

— with three mobile Wall's parlours in front of me! Sadly, it is a little early in the day for these indulgences — I'm not sure that Mama would approve of me spoiling my lunch — so I resist.

This crossroads brings more pressing choices: do I go left, right or straight on? Wanting to explore a little further, I choose to go straight ahead to Savill Gardens.

The flora is equally lively as it was the last time I was here. Such is the beautiful mix of native and exotic plants and trees that I marvel at the fantastic work of the rangers of the Crown Estate who keep this place looking immaculate. ▶▶

STOP!



CAFES

Savill Building, The Royal Landscape, Wick Lane, Egham, Surrey, TW20 0XD
Tel: 01753 860222.
www.theroyallandscape.co.uk/visitor-information/the-savill-building/
Windsor Great Park Post Office and General Store, The Village, Windsor, Berkshire, SL4 2HZ.
Virginia Water Kiosk, Virginia Water Car Park, London Road, Virginia Water, Surrey, GU25 4QF.

PUB

The Fox and Hounds, Bishopsgate Road, Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey, TW20 0XU.
Tel: 01784 433098

BIKESHOP

Wellington Trek, 5 Station Parade, London Road, Sunningdale, Berkshire, SL5 0EP.
Tel: 01344 874611. www.wellingtontrek.co.uk

TRAIN STATION

Virginia Water

PLACES OF INTEREST

The Savill Garden and The Valley Gardens, Wick Lane, Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey, TW20 0UU. Tel: 01784 435544.
www.theroyallandscape.co.uk
The Cascade, Virginia Water Lake

OLD PILE

Leptis Magna ruins, Virginia Water Lake
Totem Pole, Virginia Water Lake
Obelisk and Obelisk Pond, Virginia Water Lake
The Copper Horse Statue, Snow Hill, Windsor Great Park

“Windsor Castle towers in the distance. I’d love to take luncheon with Her Majesty, but I’m glowing too much”



Cantering up towards the Copper Horse sculpture



Oh no, that blot on the landscape — the dour-looking Savill Building — is still there. Why does the landscape have to be spoiled by this modern architecture, in the name of design? Surely we have enough natural treats outdoors to appreciate, in the shape of these lovely natural creations. I’m sure the Savill Building is nice enough inside, but the outside spoils my view, and its shape looks positively out of place in these beautiful surroundings.

Tea and serenity

I much prefer to have tea and cake at the delightful Windsor Great Park Post Office and Village Store. With that in mind, I head in that direction, but not without the small challenge of riding up Snow Hill. As I get older, I find this road harder and harder to ascend — and of course it is much too unladylike to perspire! I shall soon need a motorised bicycle, I fear.

The views from here really are such a sight to behold. On one side is the beautifully sculptured Copper Horse, and on the other, to my right, is the vast parkland of the Long Walk, with Windsor Castle towering majestically in the distance. I should love to take luncheon with Her Majesty, but probably not when I am glowing so much! Instead, on this quiet morning, my preferred option is a lovely cup of tea at the Windsor Great Park Post Office and Village Store.

The folk in the shop are always very friendly. A gentleman is making polite but nervous conversation as he purchases his items — he’s getting married in Windsor later that afternoon, the lucky soul. The shopkeeper, a chap from Liverpool, is chatty, and only slightly less nervous. His team, Everton, is playing that afternoon — one can’t have everything, I suppose!

Tea outside in the sunshine is very pleasant. Other bicycle riders arrive and a merry group is formed outside the store. We bid each other good morning. Looking at them in all their livery for riding off-road on heavy-duty bicycles seems very tough and too modern for me. I’d never join in with that folly!



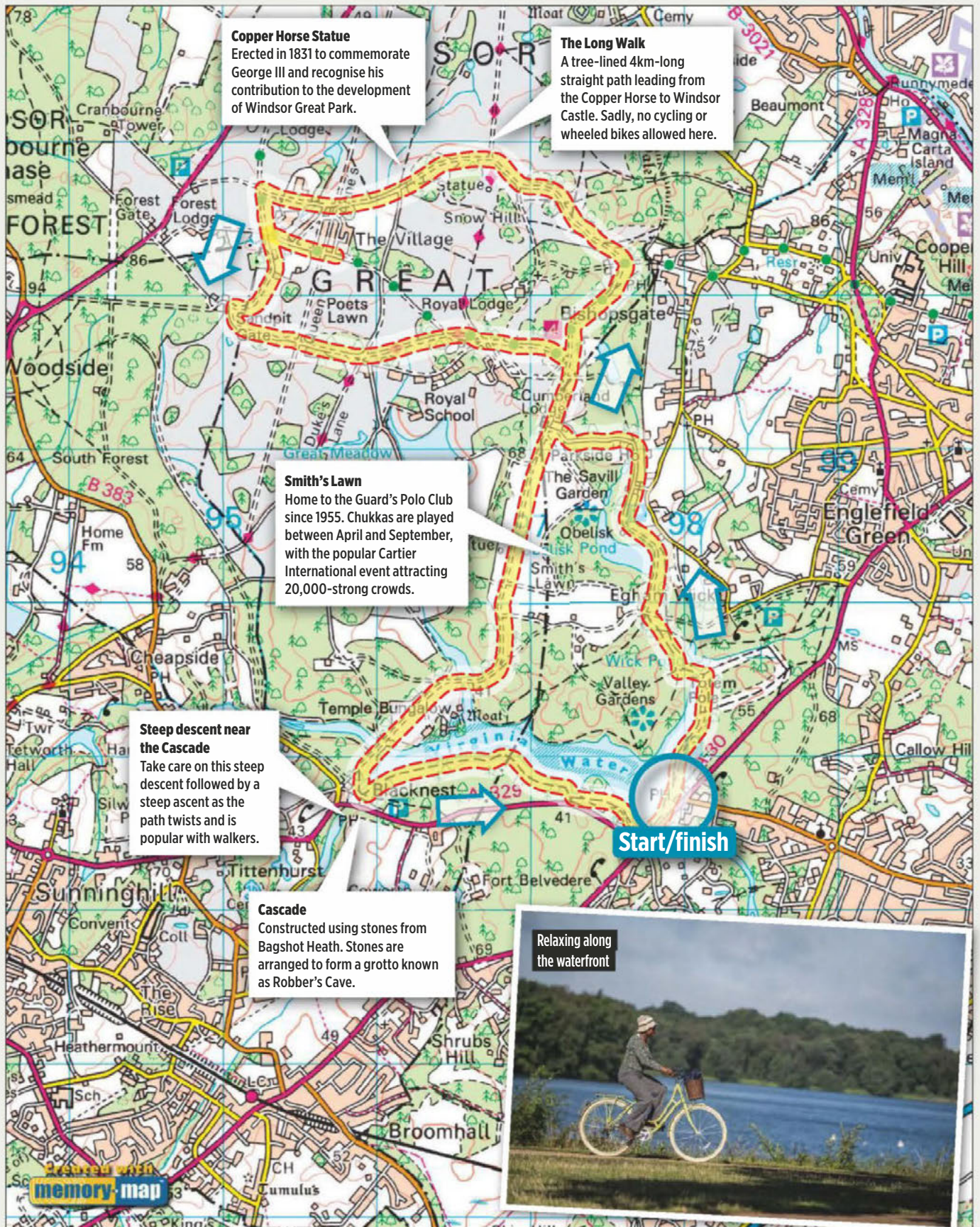
Ladies what luncheon

As mid-morning approaches, it is time to make tracks and return to the house for luncheon with Mama and the ladies. After a lovely descent past the Royal School, admiring the deer and the beautiful valley gardens bulging with rhododendrons and magnolias, I am back at Virginia Water, close to the Guards Polo Club. Sadly there are no chukkas today and not many more scheduled for the remainder of the season. I hope Papa remembers to pay his £22,000 membership fee for next season!

My ride ends here, but not without stopping to contemplate my favourite part of Virginia Water, the cascade. It’s not Niagara or Victoria but it is ornate and bijou, made from Saxon stones and with a little grotto. It’s a wonderful place for quiet reflection — before the masses arrive, at least.

Alas, for now I must leave you, my dear reader, as I don’t want to be late for the gong for luncheon.

End



ROAD BOOK

From the car park next to the Wheatsheaf Pub, turn right and follow the signs for Savill Gardens. Cross the stone bridge, pass the Totem pole and go up the hill. At the crossroads, continue straight on

past the Savill building and the obelisk. Follow the path around to the left. At the T-junction, turn right and enter Windsor Great Park via Cumberland Gate. After Cumberland Lodge, take the right fork towards the Bishopsgate. Follow the path through the woods. At the second junction, turn left and climb up Snow Hill. Follow the signs to the village to arrive at the village post office. Turn right out of

the shop and at the junction turn left. Follow the path past the Jubilee Monument and the Royal School. At the T-junction, turn right and leave Windsor Great Park via Cumberland Gate. Follow the path down to Virginia Water Lake. Shortly after crossing the five-arch bridge, turn sharp left and follow the path back to the start of the ride. It's time for an ice cream or at least a cuppa.

A full-page photograph of a cyclist riding on a paved path. The cyclist is wearing a white and red patterned jersey, black shorts, a white helmet, and sunglasses. They are leaning forward in a racing position. The path is paved and curves slightly to the left. To the right of the path is a field of tall, golden-brown grass. In the background, there are rolling hills and a clear blue sky with several white, fluffy clouds. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

Norfolk Nelson & Lavender

**On the trail of Lord Horatio Nelson under
Norfolk's vast skies — but remember to stop
and smell the flowers...**

Words Avril Charlton **Photos** Graham Charlton

HEADS UP

A full day in the saddle on a quest for local knowledge and floral frolicking

Distance: 44 miles

Big hills: 0

Challenge: ★★☆☆☆

Cafe stops: 1



Above: Big sky country boasts picture-perfect panoramas

Visiting Norfolk for the first time it was a pleasure to experience riding along quiet country lanes stretching ahead for miles through beautiful scenery. Opening our map of local cycle routes we were spoilt for choice. Should we have a look at the Norfolk Coast Cycleway, the Peddars Way, one of the 10 'traffic-free family routes' or choose a recommended circular ride from the 24 on offer? It certainly looked like this was an area that took its cycling seriously. Norfolk is known for many things, one of which is the fact that Lord Horatio Nelson was born here, in a small village called Burnham Thorpe. So, we picked a route that was loosely Nelson-themed but including, just for me, lots of lavender.

We were guests at the White Horse in Brancaster Staithe. This is in a beautiful location overlooking tidal marshland and Scolt Head Nature Reserve with the Norfolk Coastal Path at the bottom of the garden. Here we found our first Nelson connection, as some have written that the future Admiral learned to sail in these waters. Sitting in the hotel's conservatory restaurant it's almost impossible to tear your eyes away from the view of the seascape, but

eventually we did and set off towards the first of the 'Burnham' villages on our route. St Mary's church in neighbouring Burnham Deepdale has an impressive Saxon round tower and it was just past here that we left the main road and went to have a look at Burnham Market. This is a busy focal point for the area with plenty of traditional shops and places to eat. The village pub is proud of its history and, following the Battle of Trafalgar, changed its name from the Mermaid to the Admiral Nelson.

Big sky country

We left all the bustle behind and within a few minutes of riding we understood why Norfolk is often referred to as 'Big Sky Country'. Vast expanses of agricultural land spread out either side of us and we rolled along at a steady pace enjoying the views. We came across a few gentle undulations but no big hills. After about six miles we arrived in Docking opposite a pretty pond, and stopping for a bit of map reading with the help of a friendly local, we navigated around the short one-way section and pointed ourselves in the right direction towards Ringstead.

My impression of cycling through Ringstead was of beautiful gardens overflowing with flowers. Two hikers resting on a bench in the sunshine were clearly amused by the sight of us circling the village in an attempt to find our way and gave us a tip about the quietest, most scenic route to our next stop at Norfolk Lavender. It turned out to be the best way as we emerged just a short distance from our turning and avoided most of the main road. I had been drawn to this place by the gorgeous images on the website and I wasn't disappointed — if you love lavender you can immerse yourself in it here. The publicity promises a 'fragrant experience', which sums it up nicely. Our visit was made even better with coffee, cake and a lavender scone

**44
miles**



Loving the lavender, but never losing Nelson's scent

STOP!**CAFES**

The Lavender Kitchen, Norfolk
Lavender, Caley Mill, Heacham, Norfolk,
PE31 7JE
01485 571965
www.norfolk-lavender.co.uk

PUBS

The Jolly Sailors, Brancaster Staithe,
Norfolk, PE31 8BJ
01485 210314
www.jollysailorsbrancaster.co.uk

WHERE TO STAY

The White Horse, (Double rooms with
breakfast from £150), Main Road,
Brancaster Staithe, Norfolk PE31 8BY
01485 210262
www.whitehorsebrancaster.co.uk

FOR ALL THINGS NORFOLK

www.visitnorfolk.co.uk

from the Lavender Kitchen Cafe, which we enjoyed sitting by the river.

Leaving the heady scent behind we rode on through to Sedgeford and Fring until we spotted a windmill and took a short diversion along a tiny lane. Bircham Windmill has a tearoom, bakery, gift shop and accommodation. It's a lovely spot and for an admission fee you can explore all five floors of the mill. They also hire out bikes.

Here be deer

Back on the road we cycled along the edge of an 18th century deer park, which is part of the Houghton Hall estate. Hundreds of deer live in these grounds including some rare ones called Pere David, Sambar and Chital. We were heading for North Pole Farm, which was clearly marked on the map, but reaching the crossroads we couldn't see a sign. Luckily a kindly passer-by came to our rescue again and directed us towards Syderstone and North Creake, which were the next points of interest on our planned route (honestly there was a plan but thank goodness for the friendly people of Norfolk). We were clocking up the miles by this point so when we reached North Creake we decided not to visit the 13th century remains of Creake Abbey but to carry straight on to Burnham Thorpe to pick up the unravelling thread of our Nelson-based theme.

Enjoying more quiet roads, wide blue skies and green fields we rode into Burnham Thorpe but the plaque marking the Admiral's birthplace eluded us. This was getting to be a recurring occurrence now but after asking a knowledgeable resident in the village we found the site of the old Parsonage which was Nelson's first home. He was the son of a local clergyman and lived in Norfolk until he joined the navy aged 12. Nelson was



“We were clocking up the miles – enjoying quiet roads, wide blue skies and green fields”

baptised in the village church, which was renovated in the 19th century. Inside there is a bust of Nelson on the wall near the tomb of his father, Edmund. The church has a lectern and cross made from oak that was taken from HMS Victory. When Nelson married, he and his wife, Frances, returned to live in Burnham Thorpe until he went back to sea in 1793 for the French Revolutionary Wars. The pub here was originally called the Plough but, as in Burnham Market, was renamed the Lord Nelson in his honour.

Now with our Nelson connection restored we skirted around the edge of Burnham Market to arrive back at Brancaster Staithe for a last look at the beautiful harbour view. It had been a thoroughly lovely day of riding. **End**



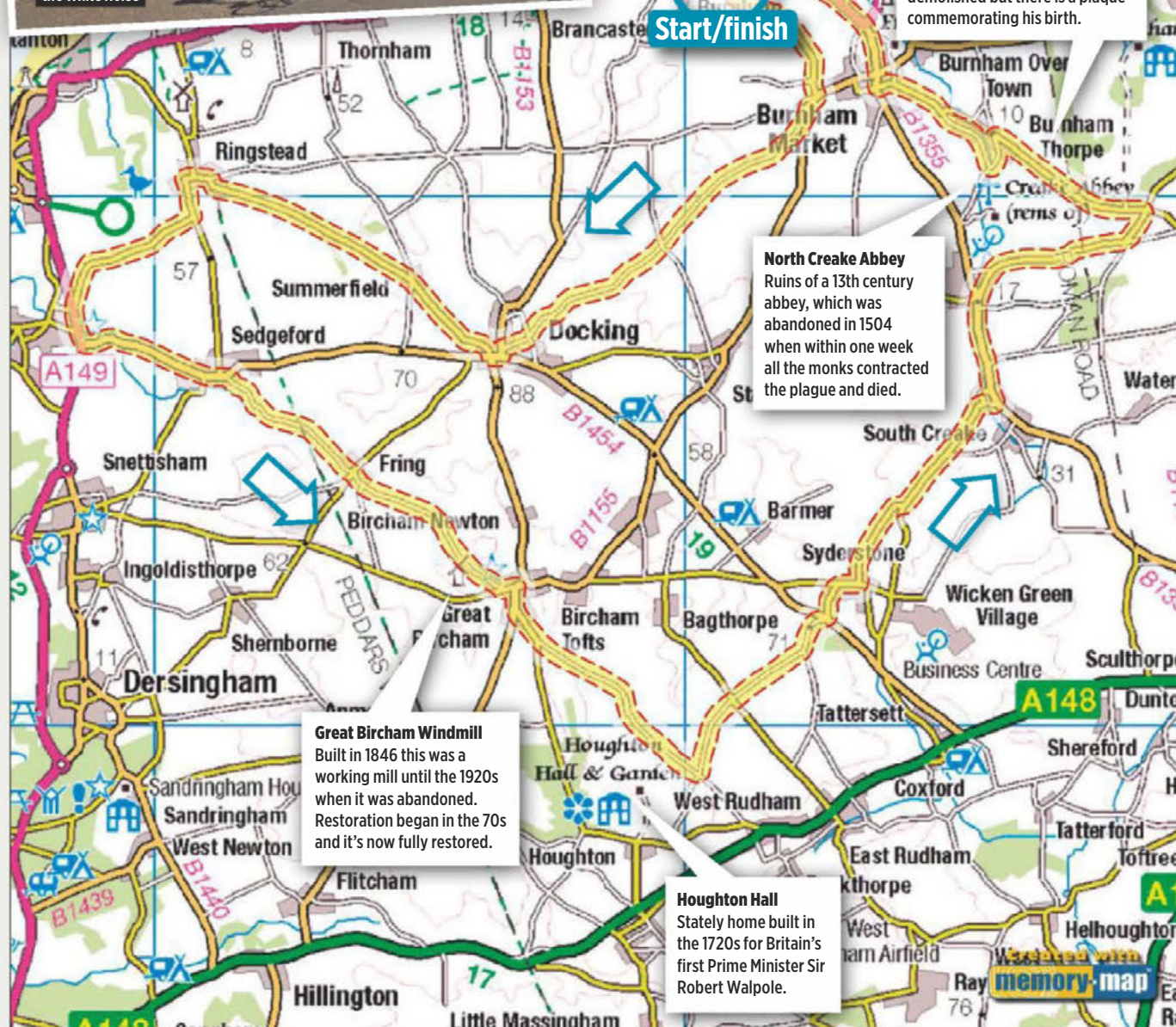
Mission accomplished!
The elusive plaque

Top: Spinning passed Bircham Windmill
Right: Coffee, cake and coordinates: a cyclist's standard rest break





Ready to saddle up at the White Horse



ROAD BOOK

From Brancaster Staithe ride east through Burnham Deepdale turning right at the sign for Burnham Market. At the junction turn left to visit the town then head west to a fork in the road — stay right and continue to Docking. Facing the pond turn left, right, then right onto Ringstead Road. Stay on this lane through Ringstead then turn left out of the village taking the next right. At the

junction with the A149 turn left towards the traffic lights. Norfolk Lavender is on the left.

Leave Norfolk Lavender via the car park and join the B1454 to Sedgford. At the fork bear right to Fring. At the bottom of the hill turn left at the first grass triangle then next right. Stay on this road to Great Bircham. The windmill is visible on the right along a narrow lane.

Return to the Fring Road. At the junction with the stone cross turn right then left onto Crow Lane. After about 10km turn left at the crossroads. Follow this lane to a T-junction. Turn left to reach

the B1454. Cross and take the first left. At the next junction turn right then left onto Creake Road.

At South Creake turn left onto the B1355 and ride to North Creake. Just before the Jolly Farmers Inn turn right into Wells Road. Follow to New Holkham then left at the crossroads to Burnham Thorpe. Turn left onto Green Lane for Nelson's birthplace. Head along Creake road to re-join the B1355. Turn right at the junction then right again. Cross to Bellamy's Lane. Go straight ahead at the crossroads onto the A149 to return to Brancaster Staithe.

The best riding

Sandwiched between the counties of Lancashire and West Yorkshire you'll find some dramatic open moorland that includes the classic Widdop loop

Words and Photos Steve Thomas

HEADS UP

Straddling the red and white rose counties is some moorland that will challenge and invigorate

Distance: 25 miles

Big hills: 4

Challenge: ★★★★★

Cafe stops: 1



It's my get fit quick ride!" grinned Paul Oldham, a top British off-road racer and local boy. You just know when a skinny racing snake of international standard makes such a statement that this is going to be something of a tough cookie of a ride.

The Widdop loop is a well-defined local delicacy, and one that is devoured and savoured with great respect and a seasoning of awe and grit. Borderland bashing at its finest and most humble, that's pretty much what this short but very sharp wild ride between the two rose counties of Lancashire and Yorkshire is.

Barrier

Many years and a couple of stone had passed by since I last went this way, and I'd forgotten just how amazing this slice of northern greenery is. The route is sandwiched neatly between the south-eastern fringe of Lancashire and the wild west of Yorkshire, like a great natural geographical barrier dividing the two great counties.

Naturally, you can choose to start

"I've been over here at dawn in swirling mists, in the autumn sunshine and it rarely fails to please or challenge"

the route in either county. Paul happens to live on the northern end of the loop, which skirts the southern fringes of Nelson in Lancashire, but for the sake of a few good cafes we're working this one out from the Yorkshire end of the ride, which means

starting from the picturesque market town of Hebden

Bridge, a place themed and characterised by its rugged natural moorland surroundings and numerous rows of old stone cottages, which is about as typically 'up north' as it gets.

However, starting here does mean that you shouldn't overdo those great bacon butties and Yorkshire brews, as it's straight up from the start and guaranteed to get you churning and wheezing like an old diesel engine on a frosty morning.

Climbing out of Hebden is a



**25
miles**



Sign of the times: a rider of yore



Cragman: embracing the challenge

STOP!**CAFES**

Organic House, 2 Market Street
Hebden Bridge, HX7 6AA
Tel 01422 843429
Open 8.30am-5pm daily
(10am-5pm Sunday)
www.organic-house.co.uk

Cafe Solo, 5 Market Street
Hebden Bridge, HX7 6EU
Tel 01422 846570

BIKE SHOPS

Blazing Saddles,
35 West End
Hebden Bridge, HX7 8UQ
Tel 01422 844435
Open 10am-5.30pm daily (close 7pm
Thursday, 4pm Sunday)
www.blazingsaddles.co.uk

steep and stern start to the day. Up through the wooded hillside, you're treated to very slowly shrinking views of the terraced streets of the town, then all of a sudden the trees part and the road levels and you're now 'up on t'moors'.

Long, straight and rolling is how you get to recover from the first blow of the day, and the scenery is a real treat too. Before long, you're riding high on open moorland and dipping down through heather clad valleys trimmed with rugged stonewalls.

Hairpins

Riding this road is always something special; no matter what the weather or season, it has a character and mood to fit. I've been over here at dawn when the mist swirls and shrouds the crags and moors, and in pristine autumnal sunlight when the colours are a treat for sore legs. It rarely fails to please, or challenge.

On towards the Widdop reservoir and the scenery becomes more like the Highlands than northern English. The narrow road winds across the open moorland, with the darkened blue waters of the reservoir to your left and an imposing ridgeline of crags off to your right. It could be a scene straight out of *Brigadoon*, and it even has a herd of highland cattle roaming free to add to the impression, which can be quite eerie on a misty morn.

This northbound section of the ride is undoubtedly the most scenic, as well as the most challenging. There are two medium cut dips and climbs along the way, although with their steepness and hairpins they feel a lot more severe than they rightly should, which is where the 'get fit quick' tag comes into Paul's ride ranking. There really is no let-up on this route: it's up, down, windswept and heavy going for the whole way around — a true cardio workout.

Towards the top end of the ride we climb steeply out of the valley and along a narrow and

hairpinned road, which has a babbling brook, drystone walls and awe-inspiring vistas the whole way. Towards the summit, there are a couple of old wartime pillboxes. It's well worth taking five minutes here for a few pictures, as the views down the valley are panoramic and beautifully encapsulate this ride.

Directly to the north of this point is the urban corridor surrounding Nelson. It can be hard to take in that such an amazingly wild and picturesque place lies just at the top of the hill out of town; it's so close, and yet in other ways so very distant too.

The road running along the top of this ridge is also the turnaround point for the ride. Swiftly, and with a twist or three, it drops down through a series of villages before turning its attention back to the other side of the moorland that we've just climbed over.

Stiff breeze

There's slightly more traffic along this second half, but nothing too serious. The road gently dips and dives over the moors, with a huge wind farm off to the left acting as a warning sign — it can be very breezy and tough going along this stretch, so don't bank on an easy ride back to Hebden Bridge.

With a few final twists, turns and grunts, the route finds its way to the fringes of Hebden and then plummets back down into the town where you can indulge in a well-earned cuppa.

As these things go, this may be a short ride, but it certainly packs a punch or two, and throws up just about everything you could want in a great north ride.

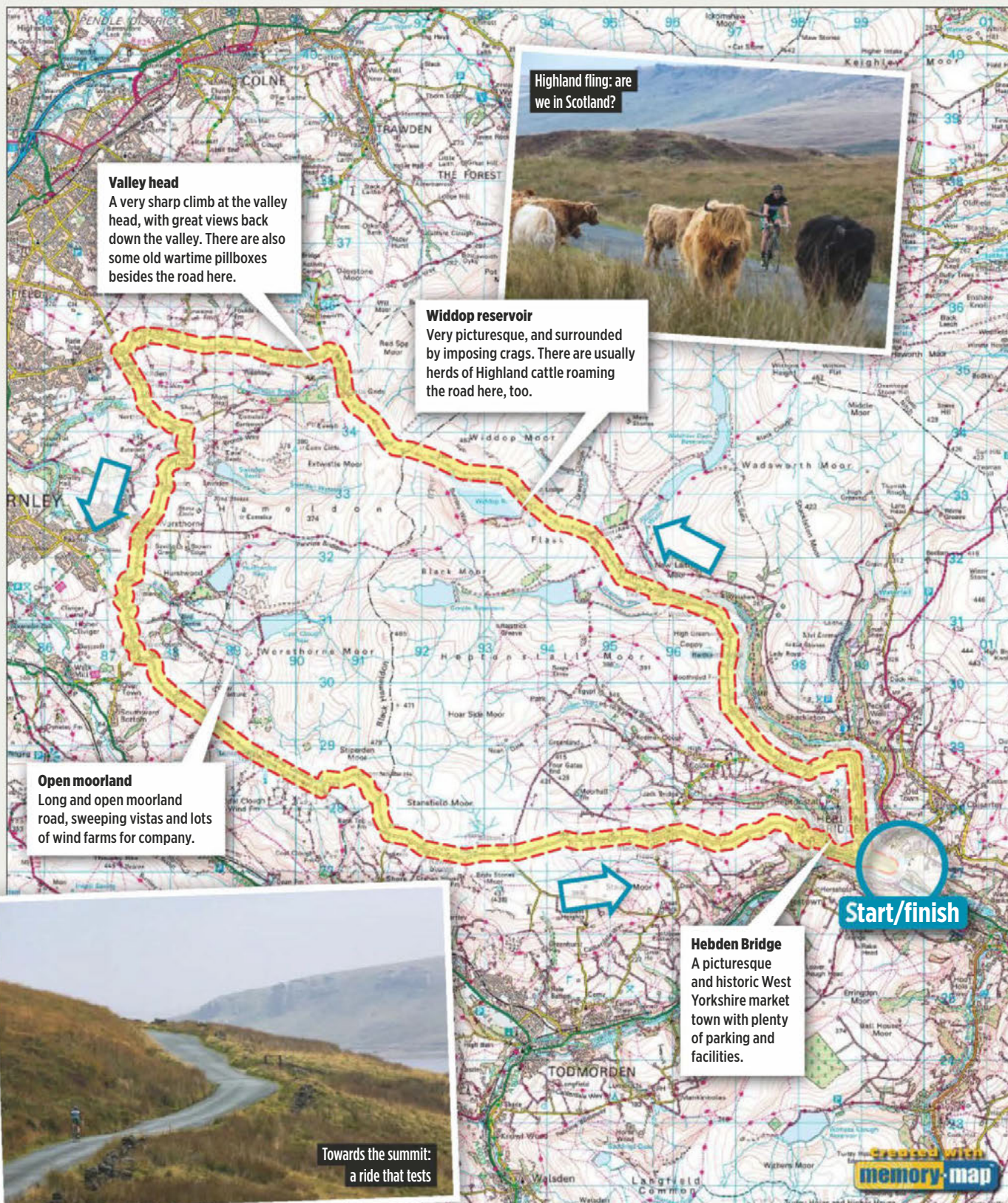
Unfortunately, just a couple of days later Paul had a nasty spill, which involved more complications than it should have done and put him out of action for the cyclo-cross season. But, you can be sure that by the time you read this he will be pounding this very route on his quest to return to top form, so keep your eyes peeled. **End**



Plot twist: the route has many sharp bends



Splendid isolation: the wilderness of the moors



Ordnance Survey mapping © Crown copyright. AM46/13. Created with Memory-Map

ROAD BOOK

Starting from the main Visitor/Canal Centre in Hebden Bridge head along the main A646 into town (west).

After passing through the busy shopping area, you come to a slightly complicated U-turn/junction. You are actually turning right and following Heptonstall Road towards Widdop, but need to take the U-turn through the traffic lights to get there.

The road can be seen from the main road, as it climbs up past some terraced houses. Follow this road uphill.

As you climb through the trees, take the Widdop Road off to the right and keep following it (if you miss the turn it is not a big problem, as the roads rejoin shortly after this, but this route has better views and less traffic).

When you do rejoin the original road, turn right and then keep right at the next junction. The road ducks and dives its way over the moors, passing Widdop reservoir. Shortly after this the road

descends into a valley. Keep left here as it dips and then climbs steeply back up to a T-junction.

Turn left and follow the Halifax Road to Haggate, where you turn left onto the minor road. Turn right at the next junction and right at the T-junction in Worsthorpe.

Keep left at the next junction, to Mereclough, where it's left again and climb steeply back on to the moors. Follow the moorland road back to Hebden Bridge, keeping left at the bottom of the steep descent and follow the main road back to the start point.

Social revolutions

A trip through Manchester's industrial heritage reveals more links than you might think between cycling and women's suffrage

Words and photos Autumn Barlow

Many people chose to vote in the elections this year, and many chose not to. But a few generations ago, there was no choice for some. My great-grandmother would not have been able to choose for part of her life; full and equal suffrage was not achieved until 1928. (Yes, I'm old, all right? Stop trying to work out my age!)

'Votes for women' isn't just about being able to tick a box. The movement was tied up with so many other vital issues that still echo today: workers' rights, access to higher education, the class system, and of course — bicycles.

Seriously. I'm not just groping for a tenuous connection to make a point. I'm being taken around Manchester, that hotbed of industrial and social revolution, by two women who frequently run guided rides exploring the history, and often-overlooked women's history, of this city.

Ursula Harries is a freelance cycling instructor and ride leader, and Glynis Francis is the founder of Team Glow, the network in the North-West for women cyclists. We meet at the National Cycling Centre in Manchester. It's easily accessible from the city's Piccadilly Station where you can even hire a Brompton — and, don't worry, there are no hills on this 14-mile route.

We leave the Velodrome and follow the Ashton Canal and the Medlock Valley National Cycle Route 86, heading south of the city centre. Much of this section is along traffic-free and multi-user paths and soon we are just north of the University Hospitals at the Pankhurst Centre, on Nelson Street.

Home of equality

These days it's a community centre but it was once the home of the prominent activist Emmeline Pankhurst and her family. Glynis quotes daughter Sylvia Pankhurst's memoir: "Mrs Bennett, an active member of the Clarion Club, taught us to ride." She draws parallels to her own activism. "In the Seventies, we rode around to distribute leaflets," she says. It was here that the Women's



A mural marks the history of cycling in Platt Fields

Social and Political Union

began in 1903, borne of frustration that women had been campaigning in Manchester for over 40 years but little appeared to have changed.

The turn of the century was turbulent, and we move on to the university. Here, Ursula tells me about the remarkable Ellen Wilkinson, who came from a working-class background and graduated in 1913. She eventually became an MP and the minister for education.

Then we head south, along surprisingly quiet back streets, and stop at one unremarkable terraced house on Heald Place. When Ursula and Glynis run their tours, they take donations and this money is to fund a commemorative plaque for number 83. Here, between 1896 and 1906, lived Eva Gore-Booth and Esther Roper. Their love spanned the class divide and the gender norms of the day.

Gore-Booth was an Anglo-Irish aristocrat and poet, and Roper was a working-class woman who'd obtained a

Start point: National Cycling Centre



14 miles

degree with the help of a missionary society that her father was involved with. Both worked for women's suffrage but specifically they were influential in workers' rights and set up women's trades unions to campaign for better working conditions. When the 1901 census was returned, they had marked both their names jointly as 'Head of Household'.

We continue south to reach Platt

HEADS UP

A city-centre cycle ride which takes in key sites that shaped the Suffragette movement



Distance: 14

Big hills: none

Challenge: ★★☆☆☆

Cafe stops: Manchester is your oyster



“We’ve all worn too many clothes for a ride. I can’t imagine having to wear layers of heavy skirts and a corset”

Fields and the Gallery of Costume, which houses one of the first pairs of bloomers, or divided skirts — though they’re not on public display. We’ve all made the mistake of wearing too many clothes for a ride; I can’t imagine having to wear layers of heavy skirts and a corset. The Rational Dress Society was formed in 1881, inspired by the reformers in the US, such as Amelia Bloomer herself, and linked to this society was the Lady Cyclists’ Association which formed in 1892.

Its suggestion of loose trousers, hidden modestly behind dresses or woollen skirts, might seem horrific to us now in our snug Lycra, but at the

Top: Glynis Francis, right, and Ursula Harries in Platt Fields
Right: Glynis cycles through Manchester University’s campus



STOP!



GET HERE

Manchester Piccadilly and **Manchester Victoria** are city centre stations that serve different parts of the country. They are linked by the Metrolink tram network. Brompton bike hire is available from Piccadilly, partnered with Virgin Trains. For details, see tinyurl.com/od876gk.

START HERE

National Cycling Centre, Stuart Street, Manchester M11 4DQ
Ample free parking and a cafe.
www.nationalcyclingcentre.com

EAT HERE

People's History Museum, free entry, open Monday to Sunday including bank holidays, Left Bank, Spinningfields, Manchester, M3 3ER www.phm.org.uk

TOUR HERE

www.teamglow.net/riding-through-history.html

time it was seen by some as another erosion of decency and the end of civilised society.

And though our clothing might have changed, some discussions have not. Ursula tells me of the debates in the 1890s which have their parallels today, all about saddle designs for women: it was important, of course, that no damage should occur to one's "matrimonial organs".

From Platt Fields Park we take more back streets to Alexandra Park, where once a cactus house was destroyed by activist women. It's a beautiful and peaceful space now, but in the past it would have thronged with rallies and protests. The bicycle was an affordable and low-maintenance way of getting to these gatherings.

Prison and publicity

But it's time for cake. We strike north, back into the heart of Manchester, and this involves some negotiation of busier roads, bus lanes and tram tracks. We keep our wits about us and reached the People's History Museum. Entry is free but we head for the cafe to one side; we can see our bicycles through the window, safely locked to the railing.

Our next stop is Elliott House, but we go via the Free Trade Hall on Peter Street, where the Peterloo Massacre in 1819 shocked the world. Ursula explains that nearly 100 years later, in 1905, the first suffragette arrests were here. Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kelly disrupted a Liberal party meeting and were escorted out, whereupon they continued their meeting on the street. They were arrested for public order offences and given the choice — either pay a fine or spend a week in prison. "They chose prison," says



"Becker wrote that by the next election 'we'll all have the vote'. Sadly it took a little longer — around half a century"

Ursula, "and they got a lot of publicity."

Elliott House is on the corner of Jackson's Row and Deansgate. There were school board offices here, and one of the members was Lydia Becker. She was also secretary of the Manchester National Society For Women's Suffrage in the 1860s. In 1867 she found one woman's name was accidentally entered on the electoral roll, and she asked the woman to vote, and she did. Becker wrote that by the next election, "We'll all have the vote." Sadly, it took a little longer — around half a century.

From Elliott House we encounter some slow-moving, city-centre traffic and weave our way through to join the Ashton Canal once more, which leads us straight back to the Velodrome.

It's been an enlightening morning. Ursula and Glynis run a range of rides that cover various aspects of the social and political history of women in Manchester. "We can cycle

Here to help: new cyclists can find advice here



Top: Glynis and Ursula take the car-free route by the Ashton Canal



A suffrage memorial carved into a tree in Alexandra Park

round and trace the history in the streets," says Ursula.

It feels like we've only just scratched the surface. And most excitingly, it's history that is still being made today.

End



Ordnance Survey mapping © Crown copyright. AM46/13. Created with Memory-Map

ROAD BOOK

You're advised to have a good map. Free cycling PDFs can be downloaded from the Transport for Greater Manchester website (www.tfgm.com) or printed copies ordered. As this is a city centre ride, there are many routes between the main points of interest: we've suggested one on our map.

Leave the National Cycling Centre following NCN 68 to the west, cross the canal by a footbridge and follow the traffic-free Medlock Way until you reach the A665/A635. Cross this and make your way to Nelson Street and the Pankhurst Centre.

Continue from here onto potentially busier roads to the university to look at the blue plaques for pioneering women. You can continue through the grounds, weaving past Burlington Street and through the concourses to come out on Lloyd Street North.

Turn left, and at the crossroads of the B5219 take Moss Lane East on your left. The sixth road on your right is Heald Place, and number 83 was the home of Roper and Gore-Booth.

At the end, turn left then right into Platt Fields. The museum's on the left. Then work your way south to the boathouse and public loos. Come out onto Hart Road, turn right, over the crossroads and onto Garswood Road.

Cross the A5103 dual carriageway and go straight into Alexandra Park.

Follow the path on the left, past the carved trees (you may need to hunt!) and exit at the top end, making your way towards Left Bank for the People's History Museum.

Leaving the museum, go right onto Bridge Street then right on Deansgate again. Turn left along Peter Street and past the site of the Peterloo Massacre, stopping to read the plaque. Left again along Mount Street and follow the one-way system round Princess Street to turn left on Portland Street. Follow this, then right on the A6 and a left onto Ducie Street where you can pick up the Ashton Canal all the way back to the Velodrome.



Bellissimo!

Forget Florence, pass by Pisa, head instead to lesser known Lucca to find out why bikes are as big as opera and olive oil in this northern corner of Tuscany

Words John Walsh Photos Jesse Wild

Stood in the narrow streets of Lucca you can almost feel the history oozing from the damp walls. Bikes are left unlocked propped in every available space between each doorway and, as you squint upwards, rays of crisp autumn light breach the rooftops and Romanesque church towers. There is amazing cycling for all abilities awaiting on all points of the compass as you exit any of the six gateways in the 16th century ramparts that surround the historic centre of Lucca.

Ride the ramparts

It's the perfect tonic for those who struggle with directions; finding your

way to the city wall is easy and the most atmospheric 5km you will ever ride in Italy. A ramp near the Piazza Santa Maria leads to the top of the walls. Where soldiers once patrolled, the citizens of Lucca now strut, stroll and pedal their way on the circular route round the town on the Passeggiata della Mura lined with plane and chestnut trees.

The only question is: clockwise or anti-clockwise? If you start from the Piazza Santa Maria and head east, your last view before descending is down the manicured Baroque garden of Palazzo Pfanner. The best time to ride is mid-morning when the dog walkers and joggers are gone

and most of the town is having a coffee.

Everyone here rides; kids perched on booster seats fixed to the handlebars bob up and down in time with the cobbles while roadies immaculately turned out in designer Lycra weave their way past joggers searching for the nearest gateway to take them to the open countryside. Many pros, including legendary sprinter Mario Cipollini, call Lucca their home.

In 2012, for the first time in 50 years, Italians purchased more bikes in a year than cars. For a motor-mad country this prompted Fiat's chairman to describe it as 'Carmageddon'. Commuter bikes are now Bianchi's fastest selling area, showing there is much more to the Italian cycling scene than racing. Lucca's narrow streets are home to many bike shops, including Chrono Bike, run under the experienced eye of Paladino Meschi who has bike-fitted many Tour de France riders in his time.



HEADS UP

A variety of ride options

from Lucca; simply pick a different city gate to pedal out of each day and you will have the option of leisurely hillside rides through vineyards, serious mountains for climbers, or take the cycle path along the river to Pisa. Spring and autumn are great times to visit for pleasant temperatures and beautifully coloured landscapes.

Distance: Various up to 100km

Big hills: Yes up to 900m but endless easier options with much shorter climbs.

Challenge: ★★★★★

Cafe stops: If you are not stood outside a Romanesque church in Lucca you will be stood outside a coffee shop, though take some supplies if you're heading into the surrounding hills. In Lucca look no further than Ciclo DiVino, perfect for a pre or post-ride coffee. www.ciclodivino.it



The bike rules in Lucca



You can rent soft-saddled town bikes for within and atop the walls or try a super-fast new Pinarello FP4 to ride in the hills to the north of the city.

Glancing inwards, Lucca is an immediately likeable city. While Pisa was bombed during World War Two, Lucca is almost completely unspoilt and the walls majestically wrap around the ancient city grasping tenderly the narrow cobbled streets and Romanesque churches. In the words of the American novelist Henry James, "Lucca makes for ease, for plenty, for beauty, for interest, for good example." Picnic under the shaded trees on top of the walls or head into town for a leisurely lunch; the local delicacy Cinghiale, or wild boar, is delicious in a panini, as antipasto or with papardelle, a super-thick pasta great for retaining sauce. A gelato is obligatory, of course.

North, south, east or west?

Sneak under Lucca's city walls in any direction and explore the surrounding countryside and you won't be disappointed. There is cycling for all from Lucca; just pick a city gate to leave by and start your adventure. Depending on how energetic you're feeling, head north for the Apuan Alps and mountainous terrain towards to the marble mines near Carrara. There are some great out-and-back rides in the foothills to the north for short excursions. While in town check out the 5km cheeky climb of Cappella. Topped by a small church, it's shop owner Paladino Meschi's current favourite lunchtime ride.

Many roads lead uphill but with the undulations comes peace and tranquillity, and villages unspoilt by tourism. The smallest paved roads are often the most rewarding: head into the hills from Lucca and just a stone's throw from the main road you will find farming villages nestled in the hillside that have barely changed in centuries. Taking a cyclo-cross or hardtail mtb will enable you to explore even further.



If ever a ride needed an operatic soundtrack...

Head north-east for a medley of villas and gardens and the wine trail; more challenging terrain lies beyond the grapes if you make it past the vineyards. An easy pedal along the Serchio river amongst the pungent and heady-smelling olive groves leads to the Colline Lucchesi vineyards easily accessible from Lucca.

Alternatively, cruise south-west from Lucca following the cycle path along the river to the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Here, bamboo occasionally lines the route, brought to the area originally to provide support for the local vines. The ride to Pisa passes the villages of Ripafratta and San Giuliano Terme, with fortifications and towers testament to the wars between Lucca and Pisa. Lucca remained an independent city state right up until 1847. Just a 25-minute train ride separates the two cities — the perfect return option if the climb up the tower has taken it out of your legs.

Pedal due west if you would like an afternoon on the beach at the traditional resort of Viareggio (riding via the small hillside villages of Piazzano and Stiava will be lumpier but quieter). Heading due south of

STOP!



GETTING THERE

Lucca is just a 40-minute drive from Pisa airport, which has lots of low-cost options from the UK and elsewhere in Europe. It is also on the main Florence to Pisa trainline and *autostrada*.

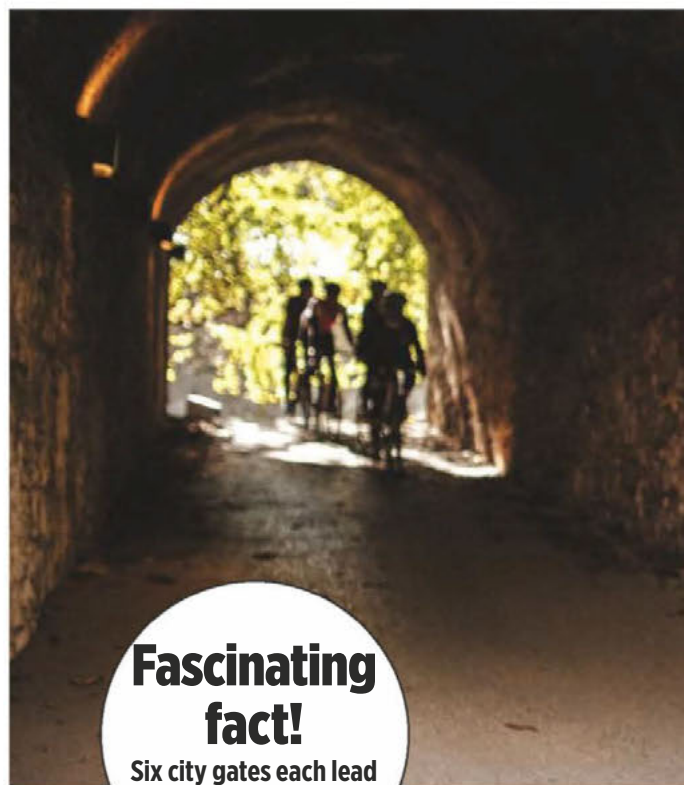
ACCOMMODATION

Lucca is easily accessible — you could base yourself in the town or there are many holiday rentals in the surrounding hillside from where you could pedal into Lucca for your morning pre-ride coffee. Check out **Casa Paolina** for apartments: www.casapaolina.it. **Hotel San Marco** is just outside the town walls, which means enough space for a pool: www.hotelsanmarcolucca.com

BIKE SHOPS

Chrono Bikes (great rental options and the best bike fitter in the business): www.chronobikes.com

Tuscany Ride a Bike (for guided tours pedalling along the river to Pisa): www.tuscanbike.it



Fascinating fact!

Six city gates each lead to different beautiful countryside rides



A break provides something of a renaissance for John



Lucca will take you to Monte Serra. Hop on a road bike and follow the pedal strokes of the greats in a climb steeped in cycling history.

Monte Serra

When a budding pro or new young rider arrives in town they are sent up Monte Serra for judgement. At 890m it is quite modest but steep ramps and an average gradient of nine per cent, with sections of 18 per cent mean all three of the approximately 10km ascents present a challenge. It is worth the effort, with tremendous views south emerging from the wooded slopes on the penultimate few kilometres.

Monte Serra is a testing ground used by all the local riders; many a pro will never return up once they have laid down their time and many believe it has mythical powers. Pros and local amateurs were timing themselves on Monte Serra decades before the internet, let alone Strava. Local folklore states that some days the mountain wants you, some it doesn't, riders feel pushed back like a surfer being spat out by the waves. It's one of the most popular cycling routes in Italy on a Sunday morning with cyclists of all shapes and sizes tackling its slopes. It's got something for everyone, whether a timed challenge or simply a mountain to scale for the views. You can tap away at the climb whichever ascent you choose and you will have no problems with reaching the summit but as graffiti adorning a crumbling building exclaims 'Sei Dolce Tanto Quanto se Dura', "It's sweet when it's hard" so the choice is yours. **End**



Things to do June and July

With the summer coming to the boil, now is the ideal time to find a sportive that suits you

Key to regions

 Scotland	 North-East	 East
 N. Ireland	 North-West	 Central
 Ireland	 Yorkshire	 South-East
 Isle of Man	 East Midlands	 South
 Wales	 West Midlands	 South-West



International

 Belgium	 France	 Europe
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JUNE 19-22

TYNE AND WEAR VIRGIN MONEY CYCLONE

HQ Newcastle Falcons Rugby Club, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE13 8AF
How far 10/15/33/63/106 miles
Entry £8/£14/£28

CA says This festival of cycling has everything from elite racing, family rides and a sportive for the two-wheeled enthusiasts that takes place on June 20. Around the Northumberland countryside there are a few bumpy sections, and if you want to ride the 106-mile course be warned that there is 2,374 metres of total ascent.

@vmcyclone
www.virginmoneycyclone.co.uk
CF/FS/ET/EM

SATURDAY JUNE 20

EDINBURGH EDINBURGH NIGHT RIDE

HQ Meadowbank Stadium Sports Centre, Midlothian, EH7 6AE
How far 50 miles

Entry £39 reg + £60/£160

CA says See Holyrood Palace, the Scottish Parliament Buildings, Edinburgh Castle and the Forth Road Bridge all lit up by the light of the moon. There will be feed stops along the way serving hot drinks, cake and soup to keep you warm and pedalling along happily. You can sign up individually or get a few friends together to enjoy this unique night ride.

www.edinburgh-nightride.com

BEDFORDSHIRE MACMILLAN CYCLETTA BEDFORDSHIRE

HQ Woburn Abbey, Bedfordshire
How far 20/40/70km

Entry £28/£38/£42

CA says The first event on the Cycletta series of women-only sportives rolls out from the historic Woburn Abbey Estate with its 3,000-acre deer park. There'll be lots of family activities to keep spectators amused while you head off on either 20, 40 or 70km routes. There will be treatments waiting to aid your post-ride recovery.

@HumanRaceEvents
www.humanrace.co.uk
CF/FS/ET/ATC

SUSSEX WIGGLE THE LONG ONE

HQ Fontwell Racecourse, BN18 0SX
How far 48/83/125 miles

Entry £23/£33

CA says Taking place a day before the longest day of the year, the extra hours of sunlight could be just the excuse to take on the epic 125-miler. There'll be nine major climbs waiting for you so don't take on the challenge lightly. If you're looking for a gentler summer spin, why not get out on the shorter 48 or 83-mile routes?

@ukcyclingevents
www.ukcyclingevents.co.uk
CF/FS/EOL/EM/ET

JUNE 20-21

YORKSHIRE NSPCC TOUR OF YORKSHIRE

HQ Ettington Chase Hotel, Ettington, CV37 7NZ
How far 160 miles

Entry £29 + fund-raising or £139

CA says This 151-mile, two-day sportive consists of seeded groups, motorcycle outriders, domestiques and full support from mechanics, soigneurs and first aiders. There will be iconic climbs of last year's Tour de France and closed-road sections with a timed hill-climb and a flat TT section to embrace your competitive side.

@TourofEngland
www.tourofengland.co.uk
CF/FS/ATC

SUNDAY JUNE 21

SCOTLAND ACTION TROSSACHS TON

HQ Stirling High School, Torbrex, FK8 2PA
How far 33/75/106 miles

Entry £25 + fund-raising or £38

CA says The Duke of Montrose had an old pony track resurfaced to create the Duke's Pass, leading people into the Trossachs National Park. This 3.8km climb had an average gradient of six per cent, which those on the 106-mile route will have to tackle twice. The slightly longer climb of Crow Road is also on the route.

www.action.org.uk/trossachs-ton
CF/FS/ET/ATC/EM

WALES ETAPE ERYRI

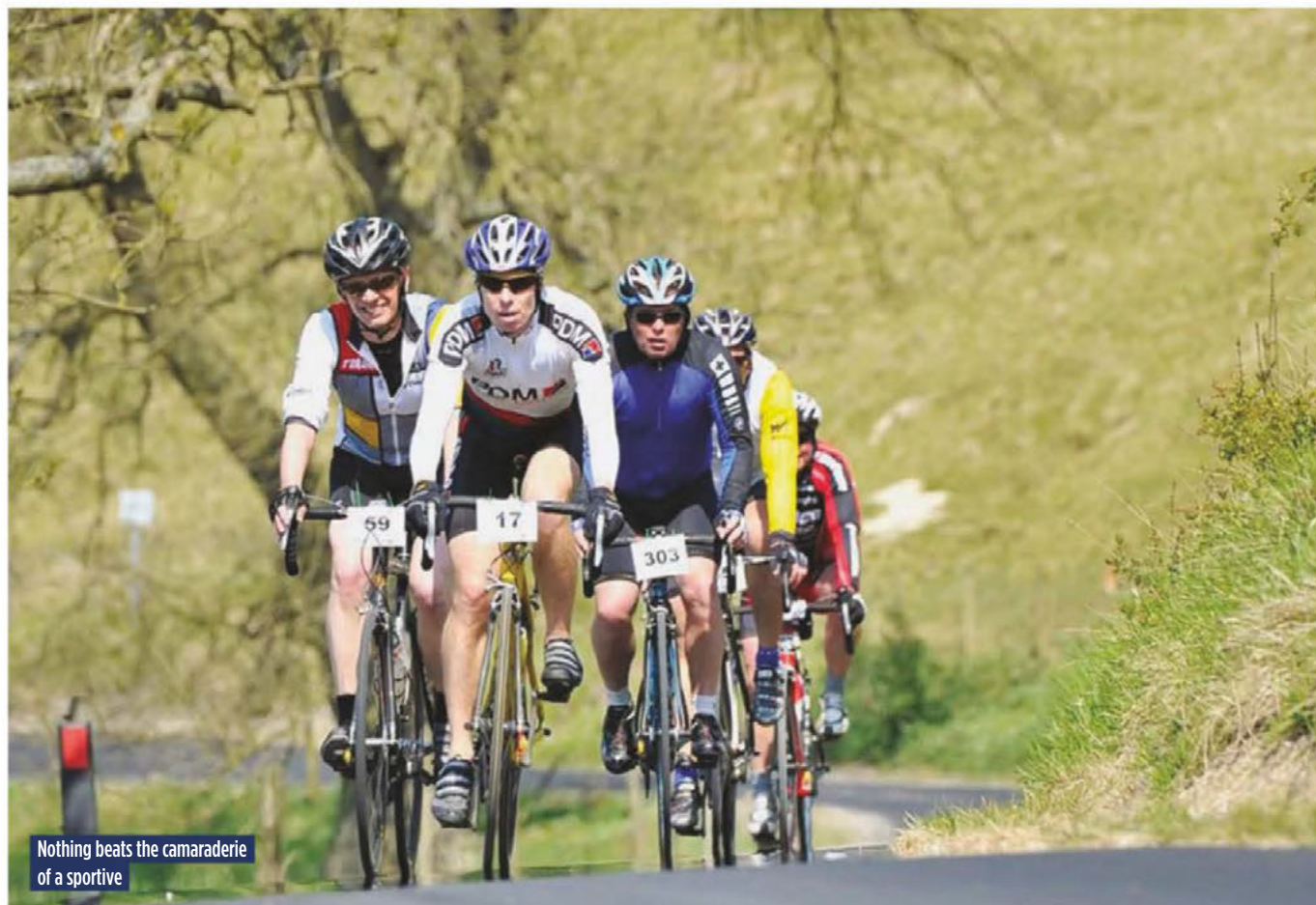
HQ Caernarfon Castle Square, LL55 2NF



Don't take the risk.
Protect yourself, your
bike and accessories.

cycleplan keeps you on the road





Nothing beats the camaraderie of a sportive

How far 47/76/103/226 miles

Entry £31.99/£35.99/£39.99

CA says This event offers three routes set around Snowdonia National park. Can't decide which to do? Then why not do all three? The 226-miler (£95 entry) is the Xtrem route, giving participants between 4am and 10pm to complete the route. A great start outside Caernarfon Castle.

@aahevents
www.etapeeryri.com
FS/ET/EM

DUMFRIESSHIRE RIDE IT SCOTLAND- LANGHOLM

HQ Langholm Rugby Football Club,
Milntown, Langholm, DG13 0HG
How far 30/60/90 miles
Entry £18.50

CA says This sportive forms part of the Muckle Toon Adventure Festival that includes other outdoor activities such as archery, orienteering and stream dipping. The route ventures to Kirtle Water and if you're on the shortest ride you can make the most of a descent back to HQ. Those wanting to go for the longer routes should keep some energy in the tank for a 21 per cent climb just seven miles from the finish.

www.evanscycles.com/ride-it
FS/EM/ET

SCOTLAND THE FLYING SCOTSMAN SPORTIVE

HQ Loudoun Academy,
Galston, KA4 8PD
How far 44/78 miles
Entry £35

CA says Named after two of Graeme Obree's bikes, the short 'Old Faithful' route and the longer 'Beastie' venture around the quiet rural roads of 'the valley' in Ayrshire. Graeme himself says: "The climbs and descents are of the short, sharp variety and will offer a stern test to all riders. I would strongly recommend that participants make sure they have appropriate gearing for steep climbs of the one-to-two mile variety."

@graemeobree
www.obree.com
CF/FS/ET/ATC/EM

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE THE WEMBLEY ROAD CLUB'S CHARITY BIKE RIDE

HQ The Plough, Winchmore Hill,
HP7 0PA
How far 30 miles

Entry sponsorship

CA says In its 27th year, this charity ride is organised to raise funds for the South Bucks Hospice. The ride goes downhill to Beaconsfield towards Burnham Beeches meandering through quiet lanes to a lunch stop at Huntswood Golf Club after 15 miles. The route then loops back to the HQ.

E-mail dl.john.wildhatch@btinternet.com for more info.

CHESHIRE TORELLI MACC LADS AND LASSES SPORTIVE

HQ Poynton Leisure Centre,
Poynton, SK12 1PU
How far 30/60/100 miles
Entry £22.50/£27
CA says Team Torelli Cycling Club has a new event, the Macc Lads and Lasses

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Sportive. Designed by its own riders, the routes are sure to show off the best of the area, heading through Macclesfield Forest to Cheshire and completing the loop back at the HQ in Poynton. Tuck into Belgian-style Bratwurst hot dogs and fruit cake.

@TeamTorelli

www.macccladssportive.blogspot.co.uk
CF/FS/ET/EM

SATURDAY JUNE 27

EM LEICESTERSHIRE THE CHAMPIONSHIP SPORTIVE

HQ Yarborough Leisure Centre, Breedon Drive, LE1 3SP

How far 30/58/76/97 miles

Entry £20/£35

CA says This is the official sportive of the elite National Championship road race. The weekend of racing starts on Friday with the sportive rolling out on Saturday. A good range of route choices — 30, 58, 76, 97 miles — with all the riders finishing on the infamous Michaelgate cobbles. You'll be able to view the impressive Lincoln Cathedral from several points on the route, including one from 30 miles away!

@itpcycling

www.itpevents.co.uk
CF/FS/ET/EM

E NORFOLK CHASE THE RISING SUN

HQ Hunstanton RNLI Station, PE36 6NJ

How far 100 miles

Entry £35

CA says This 100-mile night ride will have you pedalling from the setting sun in Norfolk to the sunrise over Suffolk, following mainly coastal roads. You can stop at Cromer, the halfway point, to take on a midnight snack and at the end celebrate with a bacon roll and coffee, watching the sun come up. A bus transfer is available on this point-to-point ride.

@cyclesportives

www.cyclesportivesuk.co.uk
FS/EM/ET

C BUCKINGHAMSHIRE WIGGLE CHILTERN CLASSIC

HQ Adams Park, High Wycombe, HP12 4HJ

How far 40/73/102 miles

Entry £23/£33

CA says Summer will be underway and the views around the Chilterns and Vale of Aylesbury should be spectacular. You'll whizz through the villages of Lewknor and Stoke Row, where the Maharajah Well is built but do take the time to look up every now and again as this area is famous for its Red Kites.

@ukcyclingevents

www.ukcyclingevents.co.uk
CF/FS/EOL/EM/ET

SUNDAY JUNE 28

Y YORKSHIRE BLUE GIRAFFE BICYCLES 65 ROSES ETAPE DU



Ripon Revolution: a scenic
Yorkshire stunner

HAMBLETON

HQ Stokesley Town Hall, TS9 5DG

How far 30/60 miles

Entry £20/£35

CA says These rolling routes mean that it's the distance rather than the climbing that's the challenge.

You'll ride through

Yorkshire villages including Seamer, Hutton Rudby, Faceby and Carlton on quiet country lanes that weave around the west of the North York Moors.

@bluegiraffe1

www.bluegiraffebicycles.co.uk
CF/FS/EM/ATC

E CAMBRIDGESHIRE FLAT OUT IN THE FENS

HQ Peterborough Regional College,

Peterborough, PE1 4DZ

How far 62/112/154 miles

Entry £32/£35/£38

CA says It's flat and it's around the Fens. That's the inspiration for the title out of the way. The longest 154-mile route has only 693 metres of climbing, so if you're

not built for defying gravity this event could really suit you. But with flat lands often comes wind. So why not get a few mates together and practise a bit of group riding.

www.kilotogo.com

FS/EM/ET

SE KENT GREAT KENT BIKE RIDE

North Park, Tannery Lane, Ashford, TN23 1PL

How far 35/60/100 miles

Entry £19.50/£24

CA says Why not head out for a pedal around Kent to support the East Kent Hospitals Charity? The routes venture into the ancient smuggler's capital of Rye, the Denge and Walland Marshes, and skirt by the coast and its shingle beaches. You'll soon be heading back from the sea into the Garden of England and the finish at Ashford.

@BikeEventsTeam

www.bike-events.com/greatkent
FS/ET/ATC

NW MANCHESTER GREAT MANCHESTER CYCLE

How far 13/26/52 miles

Entry £22/£25/£30

CA says This closed-road event will have you zipping through Manchester city centre starting and finishing from Manchester City's home ground, the Etihad Campus. It's a 13-mile circuit that you can take on up to four times passing Old Trafford, along the Quay and even on a section of normally off-limits motorway.

@Great_Cycle

www.greatcycle.org
FS/ET/ATC

NW CHESHIRE POLOCINI SUMMER SPRINTER

HQ The Woodford Centre, Chester Road, Woodford, CH3 1PF

How far 30/60/120 miles

Entry £15/£20

CA says With a limit of 300 riders make



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www.evanscycles.com/ride-it
FS/EM/ET

**Y YORKSHIRE
RIPON REVOLUTION**

HQ Ripon Racecourse, HG4 1UG

How far 65/77/102 miles

Entry £25/£35

CA says The first part of each route will meander by the River Ure over quite flat terrain, giving your legs a warm-up before hitting the climbing just over Leighton Reservoir. Then it's up to High Ash Moor that leads up into the Yorkshire wilderness. Look out for the Gouthwaite Reservoir and the weird and wonderful formations of the Brimham Rocks.

@cyclingweekly

www.bookmyride.co.uk

CF/FS/EOL/ET/EM



**E SUFFOLK
SAXON CLASSIC**

HQ Ipswich Rugby Club, Ipswich, IP4 3PZ

How far 50/100/160km

Entry £18/£28+ sponsorship or £30/£45

CA says You'll be spinning your legs through the Suffolk countryside as hills are few and far between. Leaving from just outside Ipswich, the routes head towards the coast at Orford through the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB. If you've got the legs for the 160km route then you'll visit Dunwich before looping back through Peasenhall, Bruisyard and Clopton.

@prostatak

www.saxonclassic.org.uk

CF/FS/ET/ATC/EM

**EM DERBYSHIRE
THE BRADWELL HILL BILLY**

HQ Bradwell Sports Pavilion, Bakewell, S33 9ST

How far 55/78km

Entry £22/£25

CA says A new event for 2015, the Bradwell Hill Billy has quite the sawtooth profile. The long route may only be 78km but it packs in 2,334m of total climbing with seven hills. For slightly less of a leg breaker the shorter route has just five hills: Bole Hill, Burbage, Sir William Hill, Stoney and Cressbrook. The infamous Winnatts Pass makes an appearance for those on the long route.

@BraddaBilly

www.bradwellhillbilly.co.uk

FS/ET/ATC/EM

**TM SHROPSHIRE,
THE TOUR D'ARTS ALIVE
CLUN SPORTIVE**

HQ Clun Memorial Hall, Newport Street, SY7 8NY

How far 50/100km

Entry £20

CA says If you live near the south Shropshire Hills why not head out for a ride to help raise funds for local arts charity Tour d'Arts and Flicks in the Sticks. There will be activities during the day to keep spectators amused and marked circular walks too.

www.artsalive.co.uk/tour

FS/EM/ATC

**C CAMBRIDGESHIRE
THE GREAT GIRL-RILLA
RIDE**

HQ Gorilla Firm Cycling, Oundle Wharf, PE8 4DE

How far 50/100km

Entry £21/£26

CA says This one is just for the ladies. Choose from two routes then venture through the Northamptonshire countryside and help raise funds for The Eve Appeal, to help fight women's cancers. There will be feed stations on both routes and hot food and a glass of bubbly waiting on your return. Cheers!

@thegorillafirm

www.gorillafirmcycling.com

FS/ET/ATC/EM

**S IOW
100 HERE, 100 THERE**

HQ Ryde Fire Station, IOW PO33 1BE

How far 68/106 miles

Entry £28 (£33 on the day)

CA says The climbs on the island may not be long but they are steep so be prepared for short, sharp slogs. There will be a number of timed climbs on both routes to crown both a KoM and a QoM with an Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service team cycling jersey courtesy of the organisers.

www.iow100.com

FS/ET

JULY 4-5

**Y YORKSHIRE
NSPCC TOUR OF
COTSWOLDS**

HQ Ettington Chase Hotel, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 7NZ

How far 148 miles

Entry £29+ fund-raising or £69.50/£139

CA says This multi-stage sportive is part

of the NSPCC Tour of England series. With now four in the series these events give two-wheeled enthusiasts a taste of the pro experience. You'll ride in seeded groups escorted by motorcycle outriders and serviced by domestiques, with back-up from an experienced crew of mechanics and soigneurs. There will also be timed climbs and an optional TT if you're feeling competitive. Accommodation is not included.

@TourofEngland

www.tourofengland.co.uk

CF/FS/ATC

SUNDAY JULY 5

**EM DERBYSHIRE
BEESTON CC SPORTIVE**

HQ Ilkeston Road Recreation Ground, Stapleford, NG9 8JL

How far 47/75/111 miles

Entry £12/£22

CA says This one will take you out on a tour around the Peaks. If you're looking to clock up just over a century, the long route pushes on from Ilkeston, past Matlock towards Bakewell and Buxton. If you don't have the legs for that, why not jump into the saddle for 77 or 47-mile routes winding through Derbyshire villages.

www.beeston.cc

CF/FS/ET/EM

**SW SOMERSET
BIKE BATH**

HQ Bath Recreation Ground, William Street, BA2 4DE

How far 25/50/80 miles

Entry £18/£33

CA says This one-day event leaves the spa town of Bath to climb up into the Mendip Hills with its gorges and rocky outcrops. It's then a climb through Cheddar Gorge before zipping back to Bath via the Chew Valley. The 50-mile route just misses the Mendips while the 25-mile route follows mainly cycle paths out to Bradford-on-Avon.

@bikebath

www.bikebath.co.uk

CF/FS/ET/ATC/EM

**C LONDON
LONDON TO OXFORD**

HQ Syon Park, Park Rd, Brentford, TW8 8JF

How far 60 miles

Entry £19.50

CA says From the capital to the university city, this charity event starts from Syon Park in Brentford. You'll pedal through Burnham Beeches, climb the Chiltern Hills and cross Christmas Common to finish on Oxpens Meadows on the River Thames.

@BikeEventsTeam

www.bike-events.com/londonoxford

FS/ET/ATC

**E CAMBRIDGESHIRE
PETERBOROUGH CYCLING
CLUB SPORTIVE**

HQ Southwick Village Hall, Southwick, PE8 5BL

How far 58/88 miles

sure you head to the website to register if you fancy a summer spin around Cheshire. The grub looks set to be good on this one too. There will be a pre-ride breakfast of porridge and to feed your tired muscles post-ride, *Masterchef* finalist Jackie Kearney of The Hungry Gecko will be cooking up a storm.

@polocini

www.polocini.com

CF/FS/EM

**SE SURREY
RIDEIT NORTH DOWNS**

HQ Polesden Lacey House, Great Bookham, RH5 6BD

How far 12/30/50/70 miles

Entry £7.50/£18.50

CA says There will be some classic Surrey climbs including Leith Hill and Whitedown to have you up out of the saddle. There will be views over the North Downs, a ridge of hills that stretch from Surrey to the White Cliffs of Dover. The rides start and finish from the National Trust's Polesden Lacey house

Entry £15

CA says Peterborough Cycling Club is serving up its challenging routes for a fifth year. The routes pass through King's Cliffe, Bulwick, Great Easton, Hallaton and Rockingham before crossing the finish line. Both routes will test your climbing skills with some 15 and 20 per cent sections.
www.peterboroughcyclingclub.co.uk
FS/EM

OXFORDSHIRE RIDE IT WATLINGTON

HQ Icknield Community College, Love Lane, Watlington, OX49 5RB
How far 12/30/60/90 miles
Entry £7.50/£18.50
CA says Part of the ever-growing Evans Ridelt series, the wide variety of distances here will pull you out to the Chilterns AONB. While it may be tough on the legs, it'll be a feast for the eyes.
www.evanscycles.com/ride-it
FS/EM/ET

IOW WIGGLE ALL WIGHT

HQ Yarmouth Primary School, Yarmouth, PO41 0RA
How far 53/70 miles
Entry £33
CA says After requests from the Isle of Wight's resident weekend warriors, UK Cycling set up a ride on the small island that is now in its third year. The two route options follow a clockwise, circumnavigation with a true mix of riding, from quality climbs to nice undulations along coastal roads and you can still pack in 70 miles of riding, if your legs are up for it.
www.ukcyclingevents.co.uk
EM/ET/FS

JULY 10-12

CUMBRIA À L'ANCIENNE THE LAKES VINTAGE AND CYCLING FESTIVAL

HQ Ford Park, Ford Park Crescent, Ulverston, LA12 7JP
How far 22/60/80/83km
Entry £20/£34
CA says The organiser describes this as

a weekend of "cycling times gone by", so dust off your steel steed and shake the mothballs out of your woollen jersey. The four routes traverse through the Grizedale Forest Park. With live music over the weekend, a vintage fair and their very own À l'Ancienne beer, it looks set to be a fun weekend.

[@sportivelakes](https://twitter.com/sportivelakes)
www.sportivelakes.co.uk/the-old-way
CF/FS/EOL/ATC/EM

SATURDAY JULY 11

WALES THE MONSTER

HQ Llangadog Community Centre, Llangadog, SA19 9BR
How far 192km
Entry £26
CA says This super-tough sportive is already sold out, being limited to only 100 riders. But if you fancy your chances taking on 192km with 4,400m of total climbing then head to the website to register your interest for 2016. With some tough climbs featuring 25 per cent gradients, it's not for the faint-hearted.
[@a_cycling](https://twitter.com/a_cycling)
www.a_cycling.com
FS/ET/EM

NORTH YORKSHIRE THE OPEN WHEEL: YORKSHIRE 101 GRAND RESERVE SPECIAL EDITION

HQ Clapham Village Hall, Clapham, LA2 8EQ
How far 146.2km
Entry £36
CA says Now in its second year, the Open Wheel team has firmly established a calendar. **CANCELLED** Grand Départ, this route takes in sections of stage one of the Tour and they will once again be adding a Continental twist to their feeds with *moules marinière* and strong coffee!
[@theopenwheel](https://twitter.com/theopenwheel)
www.theopenwheel.com/rides
FS/ET/ATC/EM

COUNTY DURHAM VELO29-ALTURA ENDEAVOUR

HQ Riverside Car Park, Riverside Road, Stockton On Tees, TS18 1BZ
How far 36.2/36.9/72.1/108.32 miles
Entry £15/£25
CA says From the banks of the River Tees you'll be pulled south onto quiet roads through the North York Moors. The routes have been tweaked so if you rode it last year, there is something new for you. The shorter route is ideal for the less experienced with only one climb, Kildale, to tackle. But if you eat climbs for breakfast then take on either the 72 or 108-mile routes through the moors.
[@Velo29Events](https://twitter.com/Velo29Events)
www.velo29events.com/sportives
CF/FS/ET/ATC/EM

SUNDAY JULY 12

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AMERSHAM BRILL CHILTERN CYCLING FESTIVAL

HQ Penn House, Amersham, HP7 0PS
How far 30/63/100 miles
Entry £18/£22
CA says Relive days gone by with the Amersham Classic that welcomes riders on pre-1989 bikes on a 30-mile course. There is also the Amersham Brill Amersham for the modern racing cyclist with 63 or 100-mile routes. Make a weekend of it with the vintage festival and revel in the food and drinks stalls.
[@chilterncycling](https://twitter.com/chilterncycling)
www.chilterncyclingfestival.com
CF/FS/ET/ATC/EM

OXFORDSHIRE BROUGHTON CASTLE

HQ Broughton Castle, Banbury, OX15 5EB
How far 5.5/20/50/100 miles
Entry £5/£15/£25
CA says From the medieval manor of Broughton Castle all four routes from the family five-miler up to the leg-burning 100 miles will head into the quiet lanes of Oxfordshire with the longer routes taking you through the north Cotswold Hills. The barbecue will be fired up with plenty of grub to get you refuelled after your ride, however big or small.
www.broughtoncastlesportive.co.uk
FS/ET/EM

DERBYSHIRE FAT LAD AT THE BACK

HQ Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire, S44 5QJ
How far 50/75 miles
Entry £30
CA says Not just for the larger cyclist,

Fat Lad At The Back welcomes everyone to get out and explore the roads on its first sportive event. If you're not afraid of a hill then get out on the 75-mile route, or for something flatter and maybe faster, take on the 50. The start point is on the doorstep of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire, so if you live in any of those counties then why not head out for a ride.
www.eventcycling.co.uk
FS/ET/EM

HAMPSHIRE HAMPSHIRE HARBOURS

HQ Havant, PO9 1SA, Southsea, PO5 3AA, Fareham, PO16 0DH, Gosport, PO12 2QU
How far 30/60 miles
Entry £15
CA says This circular route takes in the coastline of this southern county and, for something a little different, it includes two ferry crossings. You can choose from four start points as the route will visit each of the ports, traversing quiet lanes and cycle paths. The longer distance will head into the South Downs, so get ready for a few uphill pushes.
www.bhf.org.uk
ATC

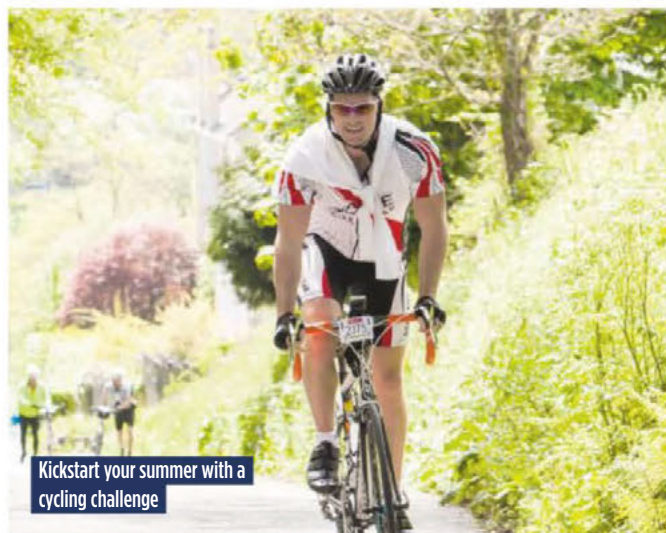
GREATER LONDON HERCULES FESTIVAL OF SPORT - BEDFONT

HQ Bedfont Lakes Country Park, Bedfont, Middlesex, TW14 8QA
How far 100km/100 miles
Entry £30
CA says It's not just cycling that's on the menu here. This festival of sport has a triathlon, duathlon, open water swims and running events. Most of these will take place in the grounds of the country park where there is a lake and nature reserve. The cycling, however, will venture out around the Surrey countryside.
[@HerculesEvents](https://twitter.com/HerculesEvents)
www.herculesevents.com
CF/FS/ET

LEICESTERSHIRE HOPE AGAINST CANCER LEICESTERSHIRE SUPERTOUR

HQ Nottingham University, College Road, Sutton Bonington, LE12 5RD
How far 56/70/90/112 miles
Entry £27
CA says The Leicestershire terrain will offer a good mix of riding and combines the tough hills of the Charnwood forest with rolling and flat sections where you can really push on the pedals and get that average speed up. There is an option to tag on a 5km run at the end, if that's your thing, for £3 more, but if not you can relax back at HQ with a spot of post-event food.
[@itpcycling](https://twitter.com/itpcycling)
www.itpevents.co.uk
CF/FS/ET/ATC/EM

GREATER MANCHESTER MANCHESTER TO



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The North Downs feature in the Reigate Rouleur

BLACKPOOL

HQ Manchester United Football Ground, M16 ORA

How far 60 miles

Entry £19.60

CA says From Manchester United's football ground, Old Trafford, you'll take on 60 miles to finish on Blackpool's South Promenade. There will be live music, food and drink and post-event massages waiting for you. Last year, 8,000 riders took on the challenge to raise funds for The Christie Hospital in Manchester.

@BikeEventsTeam
www.bike-events.com/
manchesterblackpool
FS/ET/ATC



ISLE OF MAN MICROGAMING ISLE OF MAN LIGHTHOUSES CHALLENGE

HQ TT Grandstand, Douglas, IM3 4BD

How far 37/57/100 miles

Entry £25/£32

CA says As the name suggests, the routes here will treat you, where possible, to views of the island's lighthouses. From the TT Grandstand in Douglas the routes move in a clockwise direction taking in much of the coastline with the full route packing in 2,700 metres of total climbing, including the Cregneash and Sloc climbs.

@SASEventsIOM
www.sasevents.im
FS/ET/ATC/EM



CAMBRIDGESHIRE RIDEIT CAMBRIDGE

HQ Wimpole Estate, Arrington,

Royston, SG8 0BW

How far 15/36/63/89 miles

Entry £7.50/£18.50

CA says You should be aiming for a good time here as you'll be pedalling along rolling-to-flat country lanes. You'll pass through Saffron Walden and the villages of West Wickham, Lidgate, Broad Green and West Wrattling to name a few. And with the Tour well underway on French soil, the organisers have arranged a large screen so you can watch the stage nine action after your hard work.

www.evanscycles.com/ride-it
FS/EM/ET



NORTHERN IRELAND SHIMNA WHEELERS

HQ Bryansford G.A.C., Castlewelling

Road, Newcastle, Co. Down

How far 30/50 miles

Entry £10

CA says Why not take on the tarmac of Northern Ireland on routes organised by the Shimna Wheelers? The miles may not be too long but they do head out around the heart of the Mourne Mountains. But don't let that put you off if you're a leisure cyclist — the organisers say the shorter route will be ideal for you.

www.shimnawheelers.com
CF/FS/ET/ATC



BERKSHIRE THE LAPIERRE WHITE ROADS CLASSIC

HQ Sheepcot Recreation Ground,

Goring-on-Thames, RG8 0EN

How far 112km

Entry £25

CA says Inspired by the white roads of the Italian *Strade Bianche*, this cycle classic takes on the white chalk roads of Oxfordshire's Ridgeway National Trail. As well as taking on sections of road there will be a total of nine white gravel sections across the Ridgeway. The majority of these sectors are closed to traffic. There'll be an Italian theme at the feeds with Italian food, espresso and a glass of prosecco for every finisher. Cheers!

@whiteroadsclass
www.cycleclassics.co.uk
CF/FS/ET/ATC/EM



SURREY THE REIGATE ROULEUR

HQ Reigate College, RH2 0SD

How far 89/100/136km

Entry £22/£23/£24

CA says From Reigate college the routes head into the North Downs out towards the Kent Weald around Sevenoaks and Hever Castle and its gardens. Your legs will have a chance to warm up as the hills come towards the middle of the rides. The full route has 1,250 metres of elevation while the mid and short rides have 880m and 680m respectively.

www.southernsportive.com
CF/FS/EM/ET



YORKSHIRE VELO29-ALTURA RIPON TOUR

HQ Ripon Race Course, Ripon, HG4 1UG

How far 44/75/104 miles

Entry £20/£30

CA says Held the day after its Endeavour

sportive around Stockton, have you got the legs for both? This event pays homage to last year's Tour de France Grand Départ. There's Kidstones and the Côte de Buttertubs to test your legs on. Not forgetting Grinton Moor and Greenhow Hill.

@Velo29Eventscom
www.velo29events.com/sportives
CF/FS/ET/ATC/EM



BERKSHIRE WIGGLE MAGNIFICAT

HQ Newbury RaceCourse, RG14 7NZ

How far 44/85/128 miles

Entry £26/£36

CA says This UK Cycling event is based on the UCI European Golden Bike Events, a series of cyclo-sportive events that were set up to encourage cyclists to venture outside their own country by taking on quality events. This particular sportive has been running for nine years around the Hampshire lanes and the South Downs. There are three routes to choose from, with the longest taking on nine major hills.

@ukcyclingevents
www.ukcyclingevents.co.uk
CF/FS/EOL/EM/ET

SATURDAY JULY 18



LONDON THE OPEN WHEEL: LONDON BREAKFAST RIDE

HQ Gillet Square, Dalston, London, N16 8AZ

How far 20 miles

Entry Free

CA says The Open Wheel's series of free rides continues on into another month

around the roads of north London. This guided ride is a great excuse to get out on your bike and it's only 20 miles long. Finishing back at a cafe, you can tuck into a well-earned Saturday morning breakfast.

[@theopenwheel](#)

www.theopenwheel.com/rides

SW SOMERSET WIGGLE MENDIPS

HQ Bath & West Showground, Shepton Mallet, BA4 6QN

How far 54/73/97 miles

Entry £23£33

CA says Winding through the heart of the Mendips, you'll take in some of the area's most famous beauty spots, like Chew Valley and Blagdon Lake, and tackle two gorges: Burrington Combe and the famous (or rather, infamous) Cheddar Gorge. This event normally fills up fast, so head to the website early to reserve your place and avoid disappointment.

[@ukcyclingevents](#)

www.ukcyclingevents.co.uk

CF/EM/ET

SUNDAY JULY 19

SE SUSSEX BIG ROAD RIDE

HQ Imberhorne School, East Grinstead, RH19 1QY

How far 10/40/60 miles

Entry £30

CA says This charity ride will help to raise funds for local hospice care. You can either get your supporters to sponsor you or make a donation on the day. All ages are encouraged to ride the 10-mile family fun route or there is a 40 or 60-mile route on roads and cycle paths to get you out around Surrey and Sussex.

tinyurl.com/k3twlns

ET/FS/ATC

SW SOMERSET GREAT WESTON RIDE

HQ Long Ashton Park & Ride,

Bristol, BS3 2HB

How far 56 miles

Entry £26.50

CA says This point-to-point ride begins in Bristol, arriving 56 miles later by the seaside at Weston-super-Mare. The route will pull you through the lanes of north Somerset up over the Mendips and through the Somerset Levels. If you're a fitter rider you might want to go hard from the start; if you fancy a more leisurely ride then take your time to enjoy the scenery.

[@GreatWestonRide](#)

www.greatwestonride.com

FS/ATC/EM

C LONDON LONDON TO SOUTHEND

HQ Victoria Park, Tower Hamlets, E9 5HT

How far 52/65 miles

Entry £21.50

CA says Help raise some much-needed funds for the British Heart Foundation and get a few miles under your belt at the same time. From East London's Victoria Park you'll be quickly out of town and meandering through the villages of Mountnessing, East Hanningford and Rochford before crossing the finish line at Priory Park in Southend.

[@BikeEventsTeam](#)

www.bike-events.com/

[londonouthend](#)

FS/ET/ATC

SC SCOTLAND MACMILLAN CYCLETTA SCOTLAND

HQ Scone Palace, Perth, Scotland,

PH2 6BD

How far 50/100/150km

Entry £33/£42/£47

CA says Sorry gents but this is one for the ladies to get out around the countryside of Perth. As always, this Cycletta starts with a stunning backdrop. In this case it's the dark-bricked building of Scone Palace. Moving on from last year's distances, there is now a 150km route for those who like to eat miles for breakfast.

[@HumanRaceEvents](#)

www.humanrace.co.uk

CF/ET/FS

E ESSEX RIDE IT ESSEX

HQ Secret Nuclear Bunker, Crown Buildings, Kelvedon Hall Lane, CM14 5TL

How far 14/36/68/101 miles

Entry £7.50/£18.50

CA says This ride starts from an interesting location with an intriguing history. The Secret Nuclear Bunker at Kelvedon was built to house many 'important' people during the Cold War. Perfectly situated to access Epping Forest, you'll soon be rolling through quiet lanes and the Essex countryside. A rather flat profile means you could be clocking up some good times too.

www.evanscycles.com/ride-it

FS/EM/ET

E SUFFOLK SUFFOLK SPINNER

HQ Otley College, Suffolk, IP6 9EY

How far 43/73/100 miles

Entry £25/£35

CA says Our sister magazine's seventh sportive of the season. This new ride for 2015 starts from Otley college and heads for the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB. The longer route reaches as far as Dunwich before turning inland along Roman roads to Peasenhall with its roaming peacocks. There will be massages waiting for you back at HQ.

[@cyclingweekly](#)

www.bookmyride.co.uk

CF/FS/EOL/EM/ET



E NORFOLK THE ROUND NORFOLK EPIC

HQ Great Yarmouth Racecourse, NR30 4AU

How far 200 miles

Entry £45

CA says True to its name, this certainly is an epic event that's sure to push your mental and physical endurance to the limit, packing in 200 miles around the

EVENT SOLD OUT

a clockwise loop towards Diss and Thetford before making its way to King's Lynn. The route then follows the North Norfolk coastline all the way back to the finish in Great Yarmouth at the racecourse.

[@cyclesportives](#)

www.cyclesportivesuk.co.uk

CF/FS/ET/EM

S WARWICKSHIRE TOUR OF COTSWOLDS

HQ Shipston On Stour Rugby Club, CV36 4BH

How far 52/76 miles

Entry £25

CA says In its fourth year this sportive rolls through the north side of the Cotswolds travelling through the areas picture-postcard villages. There will be a few climbs to tackle, including Stanway, Fish Hill and Dover's Hill, which was the venue of the 2010 National Hill Climb Championship.

www.velosportives.co.uk

CF/FS/ET

NW CUMBRIA TOUR OF THE HIGH PASSES (PART OF THE LAKEAND CLASSIC SERIES)

HQ John Ruskin School, Coniston, LA21 8EW

How far 51/91 miles

Entry £25/£30

CA says This is the second in the Lakeland Classic series that kicked off with the Shap Spring Classic. This one really ups the ante with some of the area's toughest passes including Wrynose, Hardknott, Corney Fell and Dunnerdale Fell. The short 51 miles racks up 1,900m of climbing with the 91-miler taking on a leg-busting 4,000m. Try if you dare.

www.seismic-events.co.uk

CF/FS/ET/ATC/EM



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Your turn

My Grand Départ

Relocating to a different country is easy. Just sort out the cycling and the rest will follow...

Starting a new job. Mastering the language. Making friends. These were a few of the hurdles facing me when I moved from London to Paris at the beginning of the year. None, however, made me as anxious as the prospect of having to rebuild my cycling life. A route to work I could follow in my sleep (and one it often felt like I did at 7am on a Monday morning). Weekend sorties with my cycling friends in the Surrey Hills. Coffee and croissants at our favourite mid-ride cafe stops. A tried and tested local bike shop. All this would be gone. Apart from the croissants, of course.

In the freezing dark of a January morning, I set out for my first cycling commute from the western suburbs of Paris to my new office in the city. Being of a similar distance to my London commute — a route full of bike traffic — I had assumed I would encounter plenty of hi-vis clad cyclists making their way to work under their own steam. In fact, almost the only other two-wheeled traffic that I encountered were the ubiquitous scooters weaving their way through the gridlock. The bemused looks I received from drivers, as I passed the motionless traffic on the three-lane road bridges that cross the Seine as it winds its way into Paris, suggested mine was a relatively rare pursuit. My new colleagues' horror that someone would be so foolhardy as to venture into the rush-hour traffic around Paris on a bike confirmed my suspicions, and theirs, that I was a typically eccentric Englishman.

Parisian style

A few months later, I ended my house-sitting stint in the suburbs and found a flat in the city itself. Now Paris's cycling culture became much clearer. Plenty of people commute to work by bike, but they are almost exclusively those that live within the city's clearly defined limits. Given Paris's relatively compact nature, people tend to cover much smaller distances than in London, at a much more leisurely pace and without the need for Lycra or fluorescent clothing.

I noticed also that the majority of cyclists don't bother with their own bike, but instead rely on the network of more than 20,000 Vélib's, Paris's equivalent of, and the inspiration for, London's Boris Bikes. After hauling my hybrid bike up four flights of stairs in my building without a lift and trying to find somewhere to keep it in my apartment of typically Parisian proportions, I soon joined them.

A weight that, when you put your shopping in the basket provided on the front, practically qualifies a Vélib' as an HGV, is one downside of using the service, but not being able to race through narrow streets as distracted tourists

spill into the road is probably for the best. On occasion, you have to deal with some fairly unreliable brakes and gears, but less often than you might think thanks to an unwritten code that states that if you come across a malfunctioning bike, you rotate the saddle through 180 degrees to warn the next user.

The biggest inconvenience is emerging from my flat, running late, only to discover the nearby docking stations are all empty, leaving me to sprint around Paris like Harrison Ford in *Frantic* as I search for a bike. Nonetheless, not having to worry about where to lock up your own bike or whether it will then be stolen, not to mention the reduced time and money spent on maintenance, make the Vélib' a pretty convenient choice for getting around town.

My commute sorted, I turned my attention to escaping the city on my road bike. My first task was to find some suitable routes. I was pleased to discover on Google Maps some fairly large blocks of green encircling the beige mass that represents greater Paris, and started my exploring by heading out to these. I naively assumed that, being lowest on the country's road hierarchy, the *routes départementales* would all provide peaceful riding, with just the occasional Citroën 2CV for motorised company. Joining a dual carriageway, lorries thundering past, their horns blaring, disabused me of this notion as quickly as I turned around to reassess my itinerary.

Eventually, however, and with plenty more trial and error along the way, I found some lovely sorties along quiet roads through the fields that provide the produce for the markets of the nearby metropolis.

Despite the quality cycling I was enjoying so close to Paris, I missed the camaraderie and, crucially, the motivation that a group ride brings. To rectify this, I got in touch with a local cycling club and arranged to join them on one of their runs.

Froome and I

Arriving at an otherwise empty car park in the half-light of a very early Sunday morning, I was welcomed with a friendly cry of, "Ah, it iz Monsieur Christopher Froome from England!" I assured the group that, despite technically sharing the same nationality, the similarities between me and the 2013 Tour de France winner were few and far between. This became self-evident fairly early on in our ride as I laboured to keep up with a bunch made up mainly of sinewy sexagenarians. Nonetheless, thanks to a spirit of encouragement and good humour that clearly characterises group rides on both sides of the Channel, it proved a great way to meet fellow cyclists and discover some new routes. I was even able, belatedly, to justify my comparison to Mr Froome, as I took a tumble on what appeared to everyone else to be a fairly innocuous stretch of straight road.

I'm still some way off fully recreating the cycling life I left behind in Britain. Even so, the process is a great source of enjoyment in itself and, as is so often the way when it comes to riding a bike, it's helping with many of life's other challenges.

After giving up a career as a shipping market analyst, Sam Keir is working in a restaurant in Paris, learning French and figuring out what to do next.



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